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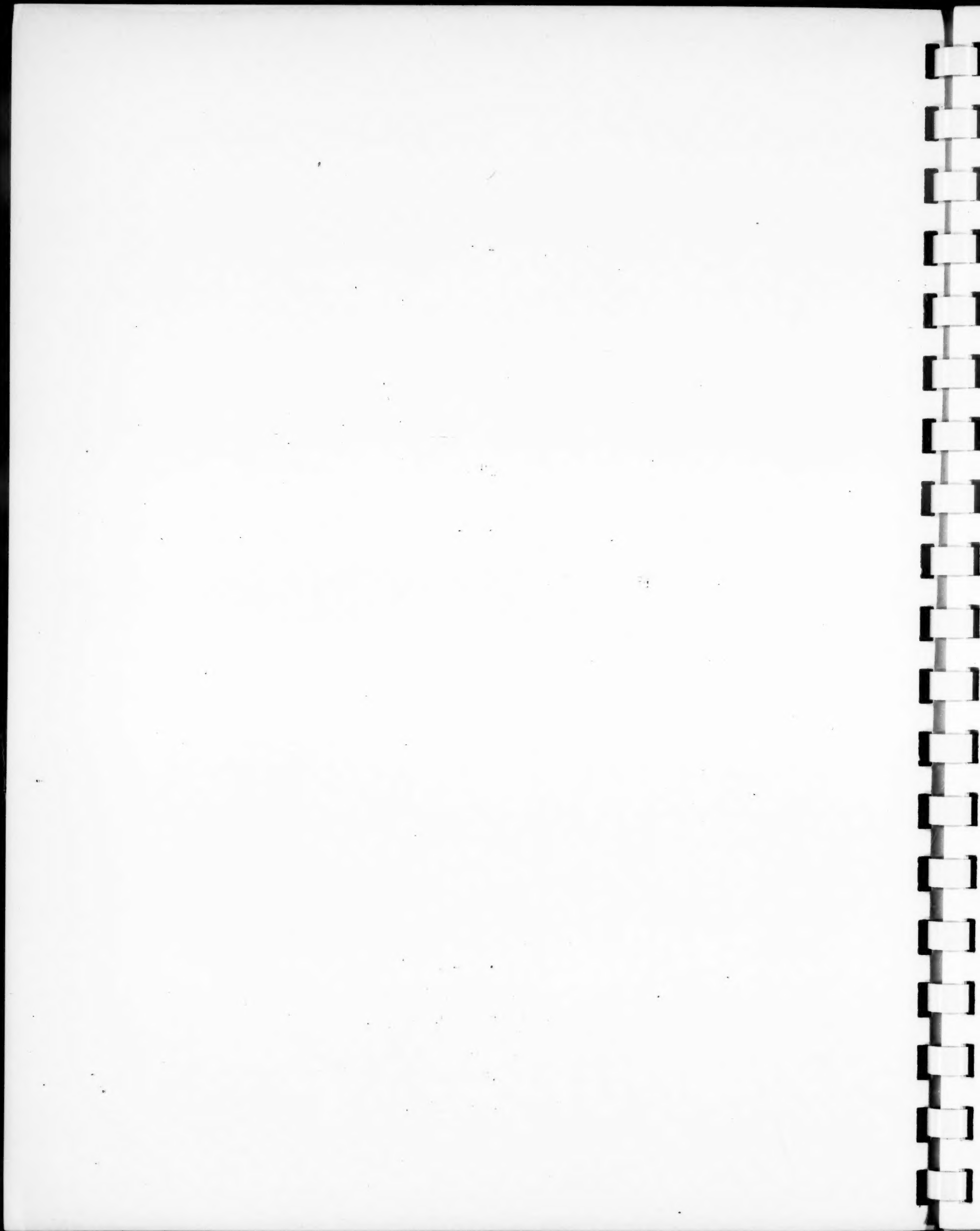
OF THE

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES

April 4 and 5, 1961

at the MORRISON HOTEL

Chicago, Illinois





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## PREFACE

The Eighth Annual Convention of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies convened in the Morrison Hotel, Chicago, Illinois on April 4 and 5, 1961. Members of the Association from far and near gathered for fine Christian and academic fellowship and inspiration.

We are grateful to the Morrison Hotel Convention Bureau for their fine hospitality and kind cooperation throughout the convention. Also to our Chicago committee....A. Richardson, A. Broman, D. Busby, and G. Youngs...we express sincere appreciation for their many detailed efforts. A word of gratitude also goes to the Dean of Men's office of Moody Bible Institute for the labor of love in taking care of so many registration details.

The theme for this year's convention was: "The Psychology of Christian Conversion". We were fortunate to have Dr. Lars Granberg present the main paper, entitled: "Some Issues in the Psychology of Christian Conversion". Dr. Granberg was well qualified for this task both by reason of training and experience in both the religious and psychological areas. He holds degrees from both Wheaton College and the University of Chicago. He has been Dean of Students and Associate Professor of Pastoral Counseling and Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary; and now serves at Hope College in Holland, Michigan in the dual role of Professor of Psychology and Director of the newly organized Counseling Service.

Traditionally in our conventions, we don't let the main speaker off easy. Competent men from the various professional areas are prepared to give critiques on the main paper from their own professional points of view. These are always stimulating and open up further areas for discussion, thought, and research.

The discussions this year were further enhanced by the well-balanced approach to the issue. Dr. Hoekema presented a paper to meet the purely theological side of the issue; a panel discussed the practical aspects of the bearing of conversion on therapeutic procedures; and another panel discussed the personality factors that we find in different types of conversions.

This year, our convention was definitely a progressive step toward clearer communication among the professional groups. May we continue to urge each other to further study and research of the type that will foster real cooperation among all those of the helping professions as they attempt to be of service to both God and man.

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# SOME ISSUES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

by

LARS I. GRANBERG

## INTRODUCTION

This title is more modest than the one listed on your programs. Two things contribute to this: the complexity of the phenomenon involved, and my capacity to do justice to this complexity in the time allotted me. What I seek to accomplish in this paper is: 1) to present a survey of existing thought concerning the psychology of conversion; 2) share with you the results of a small pilot research designed to inject an empirical element into our discussion; and 3) point up some areas of needed research.

The fact that this convention has chosen to focus on the psychology of conversion may indicate a resurgence of interest in a phenomenon which once occupied a prominent place in the psychology of religious experience, but which has in recent decades been rather a dormant issue. Just how dormant can be underscored in the fact that during the eleven years of its existence, the journal entitled Pastoral Psychology has published a mere handful of articles on conversion. Neither of its two special issues on "Evangelism and Psychology" (June and December, 1956) contains an article on conversion. This sparsity of attention devoted to conversion is equally characteristic of the Journal of Pastoral Care, and reflects the extent to which the psychology of religion has shifted focus from its early preoccupation with conversion.

Several factors seem to be stirring up new interest, however. These include the emphasis of crisis theology upon "encounter with God," the highly publicized results of the Billy Graham campaigns, and the impact of William Sargant's book, Battle for the Mind wherein religious conversion is likened to communist "brainwashing" techniques.

### The Meaning of "Conversion"

You will note that in the foregoing "Christian conversion" has been swiftly reduced to "conversion." This shift is an advised one first, since I cannot find justification for the thesis that the uniqueness of Christian conversion inheres in the psychological mechanism through which it is effected, and secondly, because I believe that an understanding of the psychology of conversion in general is a prior need. This is, of course, an issue that generates tension. Long ago William James observed,

Your 'evangelical' extremist will have it that conversion is an absolutely supernatural event, with nothing cognate to it in ordinary psychology. Your 'scientist' sectary, on the other hand, sees nothing in it but hysterics and emotionalism, an absolutely pernicious disturbance.<sup>1</sup>

Neither of these positions seems tenable. In this paper I shall argue that except for its ideological content the uniqueness of Christian conversion is not found at the psychological level. In fact, the psychological activities of conversion will be set forth as largely identical with those seen in certain other



personal activities. Before seeking to establish this thesis, it is well to examine the process to discover something of its incidence, the factors inducing it and its effect upon the personality.

### Definitions

First definitions. These stress certain basic elements: 1) an illumination (i e. new awareness of the nature of things) of relative suddenness,<sup>2</sup> 2) change of intention and character,<sup>3,4</sup> 3) integration of the personality,<sup>5,6</sup> 4) commitment or surrender, (the sense that the experience is being done to the person rather than being done by him,) <sup>7</sup> and, 5) certain characteristic emotional concomitants. "Conversion," as used in this paper, will refer to a process of personality change involving most or all of these characteristics, especially as seen in the crisis-type religious awakening.

Conversion, when one stops to think about it, is a remarkable human propensity. In fact, William James considered this liability "to sudden and complete conversion as one of man's most curious peculiarities."<sup>8</sup> Remarkable though it may be, it is an experience reserved for a minority of persons. This was demonstrated by E. T. Clark, whose classification of religious awakening into three modes has been found useful by several writers in the field and will be employed in this study. He classified religious awakening into: 1) gradual awakening, which is a process of growing and enlarging rather than change. Typically these persons recall no time in their lives when they did not consider themselves children of God, 2) Emotional stimulus, in which the emotional crisis is light if present at all. Typically, no radical change is effected, but the person does look upon some special event as having awakened his spiritual commitment and 3) definite crisis, or conversion, which involves strong emotion and a radical change in attitude and direction of life. In Clark's survey 6.7% of 2,174 cases reported a definite crisis conversion.<sup>9</sup> This trend has consistently shown up in subsequent studies. Twenty years later Gordon Allport surveyed the religious experiences of several hundred college students; 14% reported a definite crisis conversion, 15% an emotional stimulus type, and 71% a gradual awakening.<sup>10</sup> Recently a small survey taken at Hope College bore out this trend again: 11% described their awakening as a definite crisis: 27% as emotional stimulus, and 62% as gradual awakening. Since this last study involved only 87 cases, its main value is corroborative. The greater incidence of emotional stimulus experiences reported may be the product of the rise of today's great evangelistic campaigns, or it may possibly reflect a new emphasis on definite commitment in Reformed Church Youth Camps.

The incidence of conversion does seem to fluctuate with the times, however, although it apparently never appears as the major form of religious awakening. In Clark's survey 6.7% reported crisis conversion, but of those in this group over forty years of age, approximately 36% had experienced this. These persons (over 40) were in their teens during the period of the Moody revivals, a time of increased emphasis upon the crisis experience, which suggests the possibility that the Billy Graham campaigns of the past ten years may have raised the incidence of crisis conversions in those areas where major campaigns have been held. It remains doubtful, notwithstanding, that this will ever become the major mode of religious awakening, for, as Coe points out, "... (even) communions (within Christianity) that have aimed at a converted membership only have not been able to maintain any such standard as of admissions for a long period, for the conversion of parents tends, by bringing religion into the home, to produce in their children a natural religious growth through nurture..<sup>11</sup>

## The Psychology of Conversion

Conversion usually goes through three fairly recognizable stages. The first is a period marked by emotional disturbance--conviction of sin, a sense of incompleteness. The person is restless, anxious, sometimes depressed, has difficulty sleeping and generally finds life either miserable or flat and tasteless. This is followed by the conversion crisis in which there is usually a sense of surrender, a sudden sense of illumination (insight) which dispels doubt, and a new sense of relatedness. In some persons these feelings are accompanied by behavioral automatisms such as shouting, uncontrolled laughter, convulsions, or jumping. (For some groups it is the accompaniment of these automatisms that validate the person's experience.) The third phase begins with a sense of release and eventuates in a new life pattern. Sometimes the new life pattern begins in a mood of elation, in which serious personal problems are suddenly "cured." Later on it may turn out that these problems were only by-passed, as regressive patterns reappear, which must now be faced and worked through step by step.

To see what goes into such an experience we shall touch upon the motives that give rise to crisis experience, the influences which contribute to the form of the experience, and its impact upon the personality.

### Motives for Conversion

In an earlier day many considered religious experience to stem from a specific religious instinct.<sup>12</sup> More recently Gordon Allport surveyed "the origins of the religious quest,"<sup>13</sup> and concluded that the origins of religious feelings were diverse and highly individual. Insecurity, fear of death, love, gratitude, desire for social approval or esteem, submissiveness, a sense of sin, the search for a unifying life principle and many others have been suggested.

It seems that any serious shock or conflict or frustration or sense of deficiency or transports of joy or profound esthetic experience can challenge the existing self-structure and set in motion an intense struggle for identity. This may be experienced as a search for meaning or unification or peace. Patriotism has been known to precipitate a turn to religion. Underwood cites the case of one N. V. Tilak of India who turned to Christ because he believed that only Christ could lift up His people and make them great.<sup>14</sup> One young lady participating in the Hope College study marks her turning to Christ from the time when a beloved brother was required to undergo major heart surgery. Assagioli points out that conversion may even rise out of a state of satiation. In the midst of abundance life may seem empty, shallow and false. The person may be prompted to ask what life means.<sup>15</sup> Begbie's cases (Twice Born Men and Broken Earthenware) sought Christ as a way out of misery. Men like David Brainerd and John Bunyan sought help in turning away from sin. In short, any deep experience or gnawing sense of need can cause a man to seek solution in a religiously-based transformation of his life. (We speak here only of the psychological dimension of these needs, for psychology can say nothing concerning non-empirical causes of these needs or moods.)

This has led some psychological reductivists to see in religious faith merely an attempt to solve personal problems, to which Allport replies,

...the psychological roots of religion have nothing to do with the validity of religious experience... No working of the human mind is adequately characterized by describing its roots. The flower, the fruit and the influence of a mental condition on its possessor and on other people are parts of the story of that mental condition... Many psychologists have shown the effect of fear upon the development of man's religious nature, but few have commented on the effect of the religious outlook upon man's fear.<sup>16</sup>



### Factors Encouraging Conversion

Those psychological and social factors which appear to encourage crisis conversion include expectations, family influences, the disparity that exists between present beliefs or personality organization and new aspirations, personality structure, and emotional manipulation.

Expectations. - - Quite a variety of suggestions have been made concerning the things that establish a person's expectations about religious experience. These may include the spirit of the times, local or regional emphasis, or the expectations instilled by a church or theological system.

The mood of any given age may tend more toward skepticism or more toward belief. If belief is more current, the emphasis may fall upon Christian nurture or upon conversion. This can be greatly influenced by wide-spread evangelistic campaigns stressing conversion. Evangelistic campaigns may in turn either foster a profound sense of sin (as in the American Colonies during the middle of the 18th Century), or a strong sense of gratitude toward God (as in the Moody Campaigns and the Welsh Revival).

Emphasis in any period may vary with geographical areas as well. For example, in the Hope study it was found that those students living east of Detroit accounted for only one of the ten reported crisis conversions, five of the 24 emotional stimulus awakenings, but thirty-seven of the fifty reported gradual awakenings.

Family Influences - - Parental beliefs may contribute to conversion in diverse ways. Conklin underscores E. T. Clark's findings that either an absence of religious training or a training stressing the sinfulness of man and God's wrath and judgment pre-disposes toward conversion.<sup>17</sup>

Parents may also reflect the views of some religious group which places a premium on the crisis experience. They may actually doubt the validity of any other pattern of entry into the Christian life. Such a group would invite those persons whose experience fit the prescribed pattern to relate their experience to the group, thus unwittingly injecting the problem of status as an encouragement to producing the proper experience. These who share their experience become identification figures and their experience is imitated.

But the problem of expectations is still more complex, in that anyone's conversion will include factors of which the person is aware and those of which he is unaware. Those factors which fit parental or group patterns will likely be noticed and underscored, while others, equally present, will probably be overlooked, for parental or group patterns provide criteria for determining the genuineness of an experience.

The Hope College study suggested several additional ways in which the family contributes to form of spiritual awakening. These include one's ordinal position in the family, the degree of parental religious activity, and the reaction of a person to his home.

It was the second child who showed proportionately a slightly greater tendency toward emotional stimulus and crisis conversions than other ordinal positions. This trend, if verified by a more comprehensive sampling, would bear out Alfred Adler's thesis that the second child has a stormier time of it all the way.



The effect of family religious activity (measured by seventeen criteria) was underscored by the fact that 40 of the 50 who reported gradual awakenings have religiously active parents; 13 of the 24 who reported emotional stimulus awakenings have religiously active parents; and only 3 of 10 who experienced crisis conversions have religiously active parents.

In assessing the feelings of these students toward the parental homes 3 of 10 in the conversion group rated their parents' marriage as moderately to very unhappy as compared with 3 of 50 in the gradual awakening group 7 of 10 in the crisis group indicated they wanted their homes to be markedly different from their parents', while only 8 of 50 of the gradual awakening group indicated this wish.

But what of those who grow up in Christian homes or among those who stress Christian nurture who experience conversion? The Hope study includes one such person. In his case there was a period of strong rebellion against his family and its values. In some way he had identified his religious heritage with the conditions in his home that he found unsatisfying, and in reaction adopted a life style that rejected his training and flouted its standards of conduct. Some such sharp contrast seems to be one situation that produces conversion among persons reared in a Christian home, but there is evidence that emotional make up contributes to an even greater degree.

Personality factors. - - Beginning with Starbuck's empirical studies of conversion, there has been consistent emphasis upon the contribution of personality factors in conversion. Coe, in fact, promulgated the thesis that form of conversion could be predicted from one's psychological make-up. His research indicated that where a particular temperament, which he called "emotional," was accompanied by the expectation of a conversion experience and the quality of passive suggestibility, nine of ten cases experienced conversion. On the other hand he found expectation and suggestibility insufficient to produce conversion where intellect or will predominated. None of the eleven cases of this make-up experienced conversion.<sup>18</sup> Coe thought that those persons who experience conversion have an active "subliminal self," by which he apparently meant what today we speak of as "repressed personality elements." He went on to describe his conversion cases as dependent and emotionally immature persons who were highly suggestible, given to self-dramatization, strong enthusiasms, warmth of nature, and tending to identify strongly with others, especially with authority figures. In short, the pattern of characteristics often associated with tendencies to hysteria.

Conklin paints a similar picture of candidates for conversion in arguing that -

individuals achieve their religious adjustments to life through ways conditioned by their own temperamental peculiarities . . . the loosely inhibited person whose emotions find full play, individuals who are nearly if not quite of the psychoneurotic type of organization, might be expected to achieve adjustment to life only through much storm and stress. They would be more likely to build up the inhibited desires, to suffer the intensities of emotional conflict, and to manifest the more extreme forms of religious conversion.<sup>19</sup>

The remarks concerning quasi-neurotic personality organization in converts hypothesizes again concerning the contribution of repressed or dissociated elements in conversion.

This argument, that conversion is grounded in such personality elements gains still more force from Coe's findings that those who experienced automatisms (e.g.,

falling, jerking, convulsions) at the critical point in their conversion also had experienced these in other emotionally-charged situations of a non-religious nature. And Ferm reports that 75% of the converts he studied reported a subsequent crisis, sometimes more brilliant than the original experience, variously construed as consecration, "baptism of the Holy Spirit," or a call to the Gospel ministry. About 30% of the group reported several subsequent crisis comparable to their conversion experience.<sup>20</sup>

These data raise two questions. First, is the crisis experience habit forming? No irreverence is intended, nor any belittling of conversion, but I cannot help wondering if these experiences may not for some people become something like the man who kept hitting himself on the head with a hammer because it felt so good when he quit. Kluckhohn and Murray, in expounding upon their "tension-tension-reduction" formula, make the point that healthy persons find their greatest zest in the reduction of tension--the more tension they reduce in a brief period of time, the greater their satisfaction.<sup>21</sup> Is it not possible that this tendency may seize some persons who may not then be able to settle down to the step-by-step business of spiritual growing, because this is so flat and zestless? A person such as this would consider himself spiritually alive only when in the throes of self-condemnation and anguish of spirit or in the profound relief or ecstasy of another conversion-type experience. (for support see quote re: Marion Birch below.)

On the other hand, is it possible that these subsequent spiritual experiences are more like the kinds of sudden spurts in skill found in learning to typewrite or to play the piano? Here the pattern is rapid progress at first, followed by a plateau period in which performance does not noticeably progress, followed in turn by a sudden spurt in skill. Or is it even possible that a saltatory mode of spiritual progress such as this is more natural to some people than a pattern of relatively steady spiritual development? Or would this mode perhaps, be necessary for the intermittent assimilation of repressed material?

While the Hope study did not address itself to these latter questions, it does make some suggestions about personality characteristics in those who experience crisis conversion, and it allows some tentative conclusions about the relative presence of repressed personality elements. The five upperclassmen and four freshman women who reported an out conversion experience, along with a control group of nine who reported a gradual awakening, filled standardized personality questionnaire which rated them on fifteen scales. (The Edwards Preference Schedule) So far as possible, the two groups were equated for age, academic ability, marital status, denominational background and geographical area.

There was nothing in the profiles of the two groups that suggested greater tendency toward neuroticism among those who were converted. No member of either group had scales that deviated considerably from the mean.

The men in the conversion group were more often high on the deference, succorance, abasement and aggression scales. They were more often low on dominance and intraception and nurturance. (The gradual awakening group, on the other hand, was more scattered in its characteristics, i.e., they were less like each other.) An analysis of the conversion group's high and low scales show that these persons are somewhat more likely to depend upon the suggestions of others and to follow instructions. They see themselves as needy: in need of help and affection from others, in need of being fussed over and felt sorry for when sick or hurt. They are likewise prone to feel guilty, and to accept blame readily (intropunitive). They are troubled by inferiority feelings, timid around superiors, and feel that pain and misery does more good than harm. The picture then, is that of a dependent,



suggestible, hero worshipper, plagued with guilt feelings and in need of support and reassurance. He rejects leadership roles. He also rejects the role of helper and sympathizer, for this demands that he be the stronger. He avoids careful self analysis. The contradictory note in this picture is the frequency of high scores on the aggression scale; this, of course, would either need to be suppressed or would most likely be expressed in carping criticism or such other indirect ways as would not jeopardize the succorance need.

The puzzling thing about the Hope study is that the women in the study did not bear out this pattern. Among them the converts were high on the scale which stresses planning and organization so that things will run smoothly and with a minimum of change. The gradual awakening group were high on the deference scale which showed preference for the role of follower and hero-worshipper. Both groups were lowest on the intraception and nurturance scales, with the gradual awakening group more consistently so.

Such apparently contradictory results causes one to hesitate to draw more than the most tentative conclusions for only the men who experienced conversion resemble the kind of personalities Coe and Conklin consider likely candidates for the experience. In view of the small sampling, small differences between groups and this puzzling reversal, these data call for follow-up studies with larger populations and more adequate clinical instruments.

The Element of Disparity -- Where there has been no religious training, the disparity between the person as he is and as he aspires to be can make extensive reworking of the personality necessary. Often the pressure to effect a considerable reworking in a short time brings about considerable personality disruption. This tendency is tacitly recognized by the evangelist, in that he places heavy stress on the blackness of the sinner and the righteousness of God. It becomes intensified by the contrast drawn between the person's need to do something to prevent falling into dreadful punishment together with his total inability to effect his own salvation. It would be helpful to know the frequency of this intense feeling of disparity between what a person thinks he is and what he thinks he must be. Is it present to a significantly greater degree in those experiencing conversion? When present, is it likely to be more intense than in other forms of religious awakening?

#### Conversion and Personality Reorganization

Having considered the forces contributing to conversion, let us turn to a consideration of its effect on the personality. Psychologically speaking, what happens to a person when he is converted?

In many respects it is hard to improve on Starbuck's way of epitomizing the event. To him conversion is primarily an "unselfing."<sup>22</sup> This means, in William James' words, "a shift in the person's habitual center of his personal energy," otherwise spoken of as "the hot place in a man's consciousness, the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works." Thus for James, "to say that a man is converted means ... that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual center of his energy."<sup>23</sup> In current terminology this means in effect, that a person's existing self concept is shattered and the nucleus of a new one is created, one which shifts the person's patterns of ego-involvement.

This process is set in motion as the result of a sense of dissatisfaction over the gap between his "actual" self, (that which he considers himself to be) and his ideal self (the person he aspires to be). This conflict is heightened when the existing self-structure becomes identified with sin and reprehensibility, and the self he aspires to become is identified with virtue and the hope of eternal reward. Or it may be that an awareness of shortcomings in his ideal self arouses need to reshape his ideas of the self he should become. In either event, the conflict is intensified through various agencies and often accompanied by increased struggles to become this self. Finally, in desperation, the person gives up the struggle (surrenders), only to feel that someone or something else has taken charge and is properly resolving the conflict for him. Underwood observes,

Perhaps the most outstanding feeling accompanying conversion is that which most subjects have of being under a higher control... They are convinced that some influence from without has taken possession of them, and, triumphing over all opposition, has done for them what they could not do for themselves.<sup>24</sup>

The result is a feeling of newness, hope, and a strong desire to change one's life pattern.

To summarize, it appears that in conversion the person, in Fromm's words, submits himself to a new object of devotion thereby acquiring a new frame of orientation. This provides him with a new ideal self, which, in turn serves as the base from which the person begins to reorganize his hierarchy of values, attitudes, traits and intentions. Subsequent behavior is aimed at integrating his entire personality with the new self-concept. In pursuit of this, he develops new memberships, new social roles, new leisure pursuits, and sometimes new vocational aims as well.

This has a certain plausibility, but do these things really happen? Those in the Hope study reported these effects of conversion, which may provide some evidence:

- "A more friendly attitude toward others . . ."
- "A feeling of not being as self-sufficient as I thought. . ."
- "More concern for other people. . . more patience in waiting for problems to be solved."
- "I felt accepted. . . a sense of belonging to a group. . . a sense of inferiority was partially overcome."
- "I became less self-centered. . . felt a shift from cynicism to a greater love for people and things. . . felt related to the universe and a purpose for living."
- "I gave up doing a lot of wild things; started building a decent life. I became a lot more stable and accepting of life."
- "It was easier for me to face the problems of life."
- "My life took on new meaning and direction. I felt differently about my life's duty. . . dated a different type of person. . . felt more socially accepted."

Is the transformation immediate, or is the change a long term matter? Ferm seems to contend for the former. He argues that the Apostle Paul was immediately transformed, for in conversion his whole self came under the power of a new master



sentiment of significance to the whole personality, through which a new organization of the entire person was created.<sup>25</sup> This is no doubt true in nuclear fashion, but the step by step reworking of the personality seems only to have begun, and the reworking is a long, uneven, and often painful process. This can be illustrated by converts' answers to the question, "What personality or social problems were not noticeably effected by your conversion; or, which seemed helped at first, but recurred after a bit?" They replied:

"Too often I see my former cynicism cropping out... momentary feelings of regression to my former state... quickly followed by a reassurance of faith."

"Problems related to family relationships, sex, and lack of self-discipline."

"I still tend to be sarcastic with people."

"My cocksureness."

"Problems with masturbation... temporarily helped, but progress was not as quick or easy as I had expected."

"I occasionally wish to return to my old life of fast living and running around, but I always contain myself and soon the wish disappears by the grace of God."

"I still retain my inferiority feelings because of my weight."

This is further suggested by their replies to the question, "What new personality or social problems have arisen as the result of your conversion?"

The students answered:

"The problem of acceptable moral standards. Some consider me almost an unbeliever because I do not feel dancing, drinking, and smoking in moderation are evil, and because I cannot feel right about rejecting my Roman Catholic and Jewish friends."

"The struggle over vocation. I was in deep conflict at the time of graduating from high school over whether or not to plan college with missionary service in view."

"Since making these decisions which involve not participating in movies or dancing, I have run into many social problems in regard to dating, such as ridicule and people thinking I'm 'putting on.' I have a difficult time adjusting to these decisions, and also in trying to impart my convictions to others."

"The struggle between self-assertion and submitting to the will of God."

"A stronger sense of 'ought' which conflicts with what I want to do."

These reports not only suggest that reorganization takes time, but they also indicate that while conversion alleviates some problems, it also creates others.

Nevertheless, one hears many reports of conversions which are said to result in an immediate, almost complete overhauling of the personality. Rescue Mission workers speak of experience with such cases. One wonders, however, whether these drastic sudden changes may not result as much from repression as from their conversion--a kind of "amnesia victim" in reverse. Certainly some of these persons are drastically changed, but the change seems an uneasy one--often from profligate to pharisee. Alcoholics Anonymous speaks of persons like this as "dry alcoholics" i.e., people who quit drinking, but who retain their brittleness, self-righteousness and censoriousness. This gains credence from the way in which such persons sometimes show an equally striking reversal of form for the worse. Careful clinical

testing of such persons in an effort to determine the presence and extent of repression in their new personality organization would contribute significantly to our understanding of the psychology of conversion.

### Conversion and Related Psychological Processes

#### Is Conversion Unique to Christianity?

This brings us to the question of the uniqueness of conversion. Is it, as some argue, a singular phenomenon effected entirely by the immediate activity of the Holy Spirit as He works regeneration? i.e., is conversion merely the psychological side of regeneration? On the other hand, is conversion a psychological response characteristic in some persons and set in motion by a variety of agents?

All Christians consider "regeneration" a phenomenon unique to Christianity. But since regeneration and conversion are often intimately associated, many Christians use "conversion" and "regeneration" interchangeably. For some this is merely a manner of speaking, but for other Christians "conversion" is the predecessor and necessary accompaniment of regeneration. Historically, however, Reformed theology distinguishes between "regeneration," i.e., "quickening" which refers to "the Holy Spirit's planting within man the seed from which faith and repentance spring up."<sup>26</sup>; and "conversion," which refers to psychological processes involved in or accompanying regeneration.<sup>27</sup> This approach distinguishes between a stimulating agent, (e.g., the Holy Spirit) and the psychological processes resulting from the activity of this agent.

Most students of the psychology of conversion have followed William James' thesis in his Varieties that the process of religious conversion is psychologically the same in Christian and non-Christian religions. Norborg, however, took strong exception to this, arguing that the origin and the framework of Christian experience are unique. He observes that psychologists who have studied conversion have distorted the process by focusing too exclusively upon its more spectacular aspects, the emotional and motivational factors involved. Conversion, he contends, involves an intellectual context. To ignore this is to ignore the truly important aspect. The uniqueness of Christian conversion is the message of Christ provided men in the Holy Scriptures. This he calls the conditio sine qua non, for Christian conversion takes place only within the context of a minimal understanding of the Christian Gospel.<sup>28</sup>

Cognitive Uniqueness -- Norborg makes an important point. Christians believe that the origin of Christian experience is the work of God, and that these cognitive factors are crucial in the process, for these not only help a person to understand his experience, they also help structure the person's life after the experience. This is not a new thrust. Coe remarks that the ideological framework into which a person is converted is grounded in his previous experience. He is converted to something he already knows about. "If, he says, the conversion experience includes consciousness of the presence of the Christian God, it is because Christian rather than, say, Brahmin ideas of God have already been acquired."<sup>29</sup> In the same vein, Valentine observes that experience without explanation is an abstraction and abnormality. He goes on to point out,



1. It is easy to induce the emotional phenomenon on conversion.
2. A person interprets his experience in terms of the framework provided him or otherwise acquired by him.
3. His understanding of this framework--especially if it is the Christian framework, may differ significantly from its objective character.
4. The more erroneous the interpretation, the less the experience produces character change in the direction of spiritual maturity.
5. If conversion experience does not produce growth toward spiritual maturity, it is not the experience that should be doubted, but rather the validity of the framework of interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

Ferm further underscores this point in quoting a reported change in evangelistic procedure by the Reverend Marion Birch, a Wesleyan Methodist Missionary to Sierra Leone, West Africa. He says,

... (Birch) no longer made any attempt to induce a profession of conversion of any kind of crisis until after a period of Bible teaching (because) he had found that many would seek conversion with little or no knowledge of the Biblical truths, and commonly would experience some religious ecstasy or crisis. Though such converts seemingly passed through a crisis similar to those of evangelical Christians, they were afterward immunized to further instruction and frequently could not be brought to a true Christian faith.

... Those who came to the crisis on the basis of ... clear instruction not only experienced the inward assurance and peace that is common to those who receive, the new life, but they endured afterward.<sup>31</sup>

There is, then, substantial agreement that it is through some intellectual content that a person interprets his experience. This helps him define with some precision the nature of his new object of devotion (e.g., Christ) and the frame of orientation and life pattern that should subsequently result. This underscores the role of proper religious instruction, since, as we have seen, premature stress upon conversion experience creates the hazard that the experience may be sought as an end in itself -- a kind of scylla to the Charybdis of reducing Christianity to sterile intellectualism.

Although ideological structures provide the framework in which for conversion, they are not conversion. A skeptic can have an excellent grasp of the intellectual content of the Christian Gospel. Moreover, many believers report entering the Christian life without awareness of spiritual crisis. Thus, while we may not disregard the contribution of knowledge, it is the emotional and motivational aspects of personality that give characteristic form to conversion.

While these emotional factors give conversion its characteristic experience, it is well to remember, as will be illustrated below, that a number of agents can trigger this reaction. What makes a conversion uniquely Christian is not the emotional experience. Christian conversion takes place when the Holy Spirit is the agent who sets the experience in motion, and when the person undergoing conversion has at least minimal grasp of the Gospel. It provides the person with a new ideal self, that of conforming his total self to the image of Christ; a new central motive -- wholehearted love of God and his neighbor; new resources of

strength and courage; membership in "the beloved community, the body of Christ; and the obligation to make all subsequent choices with a view to enhancing the Glory of God, extending His kingdom, and doing works of mercy and love.

Conversion in its Universal Aspects -- Psychologically speaking, the conversion experience is one expression of a process common to a striking variety of experiences. These include mystical conversion, which seems to be "pure" es-  
thetic or religious experience -- i.e., having little or no cognitive content, ethical or theological. There is also the phenomenon of "counter-conversion," as illustrated in the life of the Italian philosopher, Roberto Ardigo.

Valentine says concerning his experience,

From the purely psychological point of view, the same mental machinery was at work both in the conversion of the Apostle. Paul and that of Ardigo from Roman Catholic orthodoxy to free thought. A prebendary of Milan Cathedral, his mind was early assailed by doubts about his inherited faith. These doubts were suppressed and the inner conflict manifested itself in a closer study of Thomas Aquinas and in polemical writings against the Protestants. One day as he sat in his garden, the last thread that bound him to orthodoxy snapped and he declared himself a Positivist. Here Valentine explains we have the formation of a scientific complex, which, in conflict with the religious complex, were repressed into the unconscious from whence it suddenly arose and became the ruling factor in the subject's life.<sup>32</sup>

This experience resembles that of many who embrace rather than reject the Christian faith. It is also one familiar in many times and contexts. From the ancient world, for example, Plutarch tells the story of Thespesius of Soli who had a remarkable dream about the punishment of the wicked in the next world. As a result, the gentlemen experienced a radical revision of his value structure which changed the course of his life.<sup>33</sup>

Pratt, further, cites the early sixteenth century case of Cheitanya, the apostle of Krishna to the Bengalese. As a young man he experienced a conversion much like that of Francis of Assisi. Whereas he had formerly taken a cold, intellectual approach to religion, he became through a conversion, the devoted follower of the personal Krishna... an inspired and ecstatic worshipper and preacher.<sup>34</sup>

At a less inclusive level, Allport sees psychological similarity between conversion and a person's involvement in causes. "We are bound to admit," he says, "That in many lives wholehearted zealotry for a cause acts like a religious sentiment. Such lives seem to need no other religion, for in their economy they have discovered its equivalent."<sup>43</sup> And Grensted describes a kind of conversion which took place at the trait level. He speaks of a farmer who was converted from a life characterized mainly by profligacy to one characterized mainly by avarice.<sup>44</sup>

#### Conversion and Psychopathology

To cite an apparently less palatable comparison, some years ago Anton Boisen startled evangelical Christians by likening conversion experience to that of acute psychosis. He stated his thesis thusly:



There is an important relationship between acute mental illness of the functional type and those sudden transformations of character so prominent in the Christian Church since the days of Saul of Tarsus ... both arise out of a common situation--that of inner conflict and disharmony, accompanied by a keen awareness of ultimate loyalties and unattained possibilities... certain types of mental disorder and certain types of religious experience are alike attempts at reorganization. The difference lies in the outcome. In those constructive transformations of personality which we recognize as religious experience, the individual is relieved of his sense of isolation and is brought into harmony with that which is supreme in his hierarchy of loyalties. He succeeds in effecting a synthesis between the crisis experience and his subsequent life which enables him to grow in the direction of inner unification and social adaptation on a basis conceived as universal.<sup>35</sup> (underlining mine)

Boisen considers the acute emotional upheaval in acute psychosis as analogous to fever in physical illness. Both indicate that something is wrong. What matters is not the acute disturbance, but how the person deals with it. He cites in detail the spiritual history of John Bunyan and George Fox, pointing up similarities of symptomatology between Bunyan and Fox and those who become chronically psychotic. According to Boisen, Bunyan and Fox differed from the psychotics mainly in that they were willing to face themselves, acknowledge their guilt and not employ projective or evasive defenses. This same willingness was also found in those patients who got well, whereas those who refused to face themselves became chronically psychotic. This latter group built their lives upon self-justification, either through evasion of responsibility or the projection of blame onto others. Boisen goes on to point out that although this thesis has raised eyebrows in our day, it would not have seemed strange to Paul and the men of his time. They explained both religious struggle and insanity in terms of "possession," but they distinguished the experience at the level of ultimate stimulus, i.e., on the basis of whether the possession was by good or by evil spirits. They recognized that the psychological state was in many respects identical, and they judged the initiator by the outcome. This, if true, still leaves us with the problem of why one person can face himself and another cannot.

Actually, is the difference between the tensions experienced during a religious crisis and acute psychosis distinguishable only on the basis of outcome? Is it not possible that important differences can be found, for example, in the frequency of hallucinations and automatisms and also in the content of experienced hallucinations? And how account for demonstrated difference in ability to function during the period of stress? Bunyan and Fox seemed to go about their business with reasonable effectiveness in spite of their disturbed state. Might this hinge mainly upon the extent of the personality which is disrupted? Or is the nature of the disruption the determining factor?

Boisen's thesis, if true, seems to say that a conversion experience should have therapeutic value for the mentally ill. Presumably it should lead to constructive personality change. Pathological symptoms should disappear. O.H. Mowrer has said as much in a recent publication. He remarks,

Where neurosis and psychosis is purely functional as it usually is the individual, I believe, always has a hidden history of a serious miscon-

duct which has not been adequately compensated and 'redeemed.' And if this be so, then confession, expiation, and a 'new life in Christ' (or some equivalent type of conversion) have a practical pertinence which far exceeds the boundaries behind which some theologians have attempted to hold them.<sup>36</sup>

If this is true, it should restore the confidence of some ministers in the relevance of their message to the mentally ill. The question then becomes how best to facilitate confession and expiation. But what then shall we conclude about those confessing Christians who suffer mental illness or severe emotional stress? Does the illness cast doubt upon the genuineness of their regeneration? Does it suggest that these sufferers have fallen into sin in some special way? Or is it possible, as most psychologists and psychiatrists maintain, that other factors also give rise to serious emotional disturbance?

Before taking leave of the problem of conversion and psychopathology, it is well to take note of Leon Salzman's classification of conversions for the help it can give in dealing with these questions. He speaks first of "progressive or maturational" conversion, which takes place when the person, after reasoned, thorough search, adopts new values and goals... the movement is forward in terms of personality development. Progressive conversions, he says, usually take place on the conscious level. As an example he cites the conversion of George Fox. The other category consists of those conversions which are highly charged emotionally, and which arise from attempts to evade serious problems or disintegrating conflicts by a kind of "flight into religion." He calls such conversions "regressive," or "pathological" because the personality changes produced by this type of conversion are in reality defensive solutions. They show, sometimes in a striking way, the characteristics of psychopathological phenomena.<sup>37</sup>

Careful study of these regressive type conversions are needed, for they give promise of contributing to more discerning pastoral care. Meantime, it is well that those who deal with converts be reminded of the wisdom of focusing upon how a person is using his conversion experience. This perspective should increase the pastor's understanding of the potential difficulties converts face wherever significant elements of the personality are dissociated from the conversion experience.

#### Conversion and Brainwashing

Sargant, in a recent book, equated conversion with the brainwashing techniques of the Soviet inquisitors, explaining both in terms of Pavlov's researches on "experimental neuroses." This has raised hackles as well as eyebrows. Those evangelical groups which emphasize conversion as the sole entry into the Kingdom of God found this particularly upsetting. Some, it seems, dismissed his work too quickly, considering it merely an expression of hostility toward evangelical Christianity. This is unwarranted. Sargant has written a serious book, hoping that through it men can to a greater degree be immunized against the manipulations of those who seek to extend their power over men's minds.

He takes note of the bewilderment created in the free world by the "confessions" given by intelligent and previously emotionally stable persons at Communist trials, and then delivers a shocker as he observes,

It is not always realized that this can be the political equivalent of that kind of religious conversion, after which ordinary, decent



people suddenly come to believe that their lives have not only been useless, but merit eternal damnation because some religious particular has been neglected. . . How can people be induced to believe what may contradict obvious fact?

To establish his case, Sargant cites Pavlov's work on experimentally induced "neuroses" in dogs, stressing what he considers a striking similarity between these reactions and the traumatic neuroses in humans. He goes on to describe Pavlov's discovery that drugs can be used to help release the pent up emotions produced by terrifying experiences. Sargant had a great deal of experiences with this kind of therapy applied to combat-induced traumatic neuroses. Under drugs, he observed, the person was helped to relive these frightening, often guilt-laden experiences, and thus gain relief. Later it was found that suggesting imaginary terrors to the drugged patient produced better results than a reliving of the original trauma. Sargant concluded from this that therapy results from the mere arousing of crude excitement. Apparently the crescendo of emotion disrupts the newly acquired behavior patterns through "transmarginal inhibition," which is a kind of fear paralysis of the brain. When transmarginal inhibition is reached, it brings sudden emotional collapse, after which patients report the dramatic disappearance of symptoms.

Sargant considers this to be the identical psychological mechanism through which political and religious conversion also take place. He arrived at this thesis as the result of browsing in a volume of Wesley's Journals (1739 and 40). There he found what he considered to be descriptions of "almost identical states of emotional excitement, often leading to temporary emotional collapse, which Wesley induced by a particular sort of preaching whereby he persuaded his hearers that they must make an immediate choice between certain damnation and the acceptance of his own soul--- saving religious views."<sup>38</sup>

From this Sargant concluded that:

. . . for conversion to be effective, the subject may first have to have his emotions worked upon until he reaches an abnormal condition of anger, fear or exaltation. If this condition is maintained or intensified by one means or another, hysteria may supervene, whereupon the subject can become more open to suggestions which in normal conditions he would have summarily rejected. . . Or a sudden complete inhibitory collapse may bring about a suppression of previously held beliefs. All these happenings could be of help in bringing about new beliefs and behavior patterns.<sup>39</sup>

Devices commonly used to facilitate hysteria, inhibitory collapse and hypersuggestibility include percussion rhythms (drumming; bell ringing), rhythmic movement (such as dancing of the jitterbugging variety), handclapping, chanting and singing, and the element of shock (snake handling, ritual circumcision or subincision).

The case Sargant musters in support of his thesis has impressive aspects. The sequence of pictures taken at a revival meeting of a snake-handling cult in the United States shows participants who awesomely resemble his descriptions of those ripe for conversion. However, he leaves the reader somewhat puzzled as well. For example, if Peter Boehler, the Moravian missionary who "softened up" the Wesleys, had left the country before their conversion, it causes one to wonder

how much time can elapse and a person still be caught up in the same emotional state? To confuse the issue still more, Wesley's own conversion took place in a small, quiet gathering at which a man was reading the preface to Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans - not at all the type of setting Sargant depicted as the proper setting for inducing conversion.<sup>40</sup> Even the illustrative case of Arthur Koestler, whose conversion to militant communism followed a quick sequence of frustrations, is unconvincing. The circumstances he lived through were certainly frustrating enough to force Koestler into self-confrontation--- which at that time resulted in a whole-hearted dedication to communism, -- but the sort of emotional build-up which causes collapse of the brain seem absent. It almost seems that Sargant proved his thesis to his own satisfaction, and then considered the very fact of conversion proof of transmarginal inhibition. He does not seem to consider, for instance, the long incubation period which ordinarily precedes conversions. Nevertheless his work should cause those who seek to bring men to a point of conversion to scrutinize their procedures. Measures which mainly elicit immediate and intense emotional response may well be regarded as suspect.

### Conversion and the Creative Process

One element in human experience which should give Sargant pause is the pattern of experience which frequently accompanies artistic creativity and scientific discovery. All the elements associated with conversion are present. Artists for example, often complain of periods of "dryness," in which they are frustrated and distraught over inability to produce. During such times they are restless, depressed, lose their appetites and display other neurotic symptoms. They may seek escape through alcohol, drugs, sex, or compulsive sociability. Such periods often come to an end by a sudden flow of inspiration which gives rise to intense productivity. Sometimes the work of art appears almost fully developed. And certainly the literature discussing the incubation phase in the learning process often sounds like descriptions of a person in the throes of spiritual warfare. Ghiselin, in commenting upon this, says,

Because every creative act overpasses the established order in some way and in some degree, it is likely at first to appear eccentric to most men.

Even to the creator himself, the earliest effort may seem to involve a commerce with disorder. For the creative order, which is an extension of life, is not an elaboration of the established, but a movement beyond the established, or at the least a reorganization of it and often of elements not included in it. The first need is therefore to transcend the old order. Before any new order can be defined, the absolute power of the established, the hold upon us of what we know and are, must be broken. New life comes always from outside our world as we commonly conceive that world. This is the reason why, in order to invent, one must yield to the indeterminate within him. . .

Coleridge's experience of waking up from a dream with several hundred lines of *Kubla Khan* fully formulated is a "rather well known illustration of this sense of 'possession'."<sup>41</sup> Similarly Thomas Mann speaks of some of the characters he created for his novel *The Magic Mountain* assuming an identity and authority of their own which he as artist had to bow. In discussing this with a colleague on the English faculty, he recalled reading Sir Walter Scott's description of a similar experience. Progoff, as he describes scientific problem solving, could



likewise easily be describing the emotional accompaniments to conversion.<sup>42</sup>

All this supports the contention that the psychological phenomena of conversion are not unique to Christian conversion. They are not even unique to religious conversion. Rather, they appear to represent mechanisms of psychological change which can move the person toward or away from religion, toward mental illness or toward health and creativity. Phenomena resembling conversion can be induced through overwhelming the brain through an emotional storm or they can be induced by the creative process. With all of this, what shall we think of conversion as a mode of spiritual awakening?

### Evaluating Conversion

The value of conversion as a means for bringing about spiritual awakening has been hotly disputed over the years. Those who stress Christian nurture as the "normal" mode of entry into the Kingdom tend, in Apollonian fashion, to view it askance. Others, whose approach to life is flavored with greater Dionysian abandon often consider conversion the essential mark of genuine spiritual experience.

Ames, writing from the Apollonian perspective characteristic of much early twentieth century liberal theology writes gloweringly,

In contrast to the normal process of gradual growth, including spontaneous awakenings, are the phenomena of conversion . . . Conversion designates the more sudden, intense, and extreme emotional experience. It is the result of immediate, direct control and suggestion. . . it occurs chiefly in communions which have cultivated an elaborate technique to produce it.<sup>45</sup>

He then goes on to catalogue the psychological defects of conversion:

1. It does not present an intelligent and rational grounds of action.
2. It turns on a 'sense of sin' but it does not develop the realization of sin in a large way. It seeks for the sensitive point in the conscience of the subject, without adequate reference to the reality and objective moral quality and social character of sin.
3. It conspires to set religion apart from one's normal, sane, and well-regulated activities, making it seem unnatural and weird.
4. It minimizes the function of education in religion.
5. It is habit forming, in that it tends to create a desire for repetition of the emotion of the revival. (immediate, magical solutions)
6. It creates cycles of interest and indifference, rendering the regular church program dull and drudging and necessitating periodic "revivals."
7. It makes it appear as though what is done in the excitement of a 'great meeting' is more important than the same things done quietly.<sup>46</sup>

This is an extensive catalogue of defects, each of which deserves thought and careful testing. Many of these criticisms have been accepted by leading contemporary evangelists in an effort to avoid perpetuating some of the errors of their predecessors.

David Roberts, speaking more recently and from the perspective of crisis theology, also expresses a preference for the gradual awakening. He regards con-

version, in which the person is psychologically "torn asunder and reassembled" as an indication of unhealthiness. However, he blames the unhealthiness not on some evangelistic technique or theological perspective, but on "the conditions surrounding human growth." Thus he considers conversion to be the tool religion must use in "making its way against this unhealthiness."<sup>47</sup> Conversion to him, is necessary but an evil. (This line of argument lends some weight to the impact of disparity in producing conversion-supra).

It is doubtful that Ames would even have granted the necessity. He felt rather, that much of the stress upon conversion among evangelicals stemmed from the fact that

the Apostle Paul and St. Augustine belonged to the type for which the extreme form of emotional, dramatic conversion is possible. Their personal experience has been regarded as of superior value because it has been assumed uncritically that their moral characters and achievements were determined by the manner of their conversions.<sup>48</sup>

Come to think of it, why has Paul's experience been standardized by important segments of the church? It was not so in the beginning, for Paul had trouble in convincing the disciples of the reality of his commitment to Christ, a problem which Matthew, Zaccheus, Timothy and the Ethiopian Eunuch did not seem to have. Can it be traced to any trend which indicates that persons who have made eminent contributions to the life of the church have been mainly the kind of person who is psychologically prone to conversion? Ferm seems to imply such an opinion for he speaks of persons who have so great a capacity to experience religious crisis "that they become religious geniuses."<sup>49</sup> It seems puzzling, however that "religious genius" should be associated with a capacity of mystical experience rather than with the ability to direct the results of that experience constructively toward personal growth, the furtherance of the Christian community, or significant impact for Christ upon the non-Christian world. Nevertheless, the relationship between proneness to conversion experience and significant contribution to the Christian enterprise deserves study.

Ferm goes on to express an attitude toward conversion which seems diametrically opposed to that of Ames! Ferm says, "Certainly enough is said concerning the crisis experience in the New Testament to warrant the belief in its necessity."<sup>50</sup> He adds, "those who hold to the authority and dependability of the Scriptures will be compelled to recognize the crisis nature of conversion (regeneration?)... it can be asserted that every record of conversion in the New Testament illustrates one of the crisis type rather than the process type."<sup>51</sup> If we attempt to subsume the spiritual awakenings of Matthew, Zaccheus and the Ethiopian Eunuch under this statement--these apparently representing what is usually characterized as an "emotional stimulus" type of awakening--we must conclude that for Ferm "conversion" includes any definite spiritual experience with or without emotional crisis. This not only makes conversion too global in Timothy's "gradual awakening"---type experience was due to his being a "second generation" Christian, i.e., the product of careful spiritual culture, whereas conversion, when it occurs, is typically a first generation type experience?

It seems that both Ferm and Ames overstate their case. The nurture approach to Christian growth is a smoother, more conscious, more readily assimilable approach but it seems to demand an emotionally mature context for its achievement. But even



in the best of such circumstances the factor of temperament still seems to make it necessary for some persons to experience spiritual awakening or growth through conflict. However, the emotional unhealthiness permeating the human condition frequently results in repressions and defensive measures in regenerate and unregenerate persons alike. This militates against smooth, Bushnellian pattern of growth. Moreover, some doubt whether being reared in the Bushnellian pattern will consistently result in persons who are vitally involved in their religion. As undeniable advantage of conversion lies in its definiteness and its radical nature. The individual is forced to recognize his sicknesses and spiritual inadequacies. This generates, on the whole, a more profound dependence upon God, and yields more rapid and possibly greater personality change. Allport suggests that such an experience is also more likely to be lasting, for it creates hungers which in turn give rise to a pattern of life designed to appease these hungers.<sup>52</sup>

From the foregoing, we may conclude that the pattern of a person's spiritual awakening is primarily instrumental. The value of the experience lies in the pattern life it sets in motion. Moreover, the evidence considered suggests that it is unlikely that the individual will translate the effects of this experience into any pattern of life of which he was not previously aware.

Another question, somewhat aside from the purpose of this paper, is whether the Christian Gospel can be propagated extensively without an emphasis upon conversion? Sargant thinks not. He contends that "there can be no new Protestant revival while the policy continues of appealing mainly to adult intelligence and reason, and until Church leaders consent to take more advantage of the normal person's emotional mechanism for disrupting old behavior patterns and implanting new."<sup>53</sup> This implies that psychological manipulation is all right if it produces the fruit of good character and social betterment, which, he points out, was true of the Wesley Revivals. If we accept this kind of reasoning, do we not also grant the validity of the argument when the communists use it? But whether we approach this from Sargant's perspective or not, the data we have considered emphasize the likelihood that a conversion experience will be needed wherever major obstacles personality, social, ethical, or theological - prevent smooth induction into the Christian life.

\* \* \* \*

## Summary and Conclusions

The following points were made in the foregoing test:

1. Conversion is not an unique psychological phenomenon. The uniqueness of Christian experience is not found primarily at this level.
2. Conversion i.e., "eruptive" or crisis-type religious awakening fluctuates in incidence from time to time, but existing studies show that it is reserved for a minority of persons who profess religious awakening.
3. Any deep experience or knowing sense of need can serve as the stimulus for religious awakening.
4. Conversion is encouraged by the zeitgeist, denominational or group expectations, family influences, a sharp disparity between what a person is and what he feels he should be, the pressure for swift reworking of values, the presence of repressed factors in the personality, and characteristics certain predisposing personality factors.
5. At the psychological level religious conversion seems identical in all religions. This process is similar to mystical experience, counterconversion, certain psychopathological states, and the creative process. A recent investigator has attempted to demonstrate its similarity to the process known as "brainwashing."
6. Some have considered conversion a pathological process; others have considered it undersirable but necessary because to the unwholesome factors in the human condition which inevitably leads to personality distortions; still others have considered conversion the mark of genuine spiritual experience. Some have even equated capacity for profound conversion with "religious genius."
7. The advantage of conversion is its definiteness and its radical nature, which enables it to generate great personality change, profound dependence upon God, a recognition of sickness and spiritual inadequacy, and a persisting spiritual hunger.

In considering these observations from the standpoint of Christian experience, we are moved to comment that the pattern of a person's spiritual awakening is primarily instrumental. The value of religious awakening, whatever form it may take, lies in the quality of life which it sets in motion. ("You will know them by their fruit." --Matt. 7:16)

The unique factors within Christian conversion appear to consist chiefly of the motivating agent, the Holy Spirit, and a body of revealed truth which comprises its intellectual framework (ideology). Since a man seeks to understand his spiritual experience through some pattern of life of which he has previously been made aware, it is important that the Christian faith be set forth clearly.

In conclusion, we do well, when we think about the nature of religious conversion, to bear in mind these observations of Norborg:

A burbulent, emotional conversion may be genuine, it may be humbug. In both cases, the feeling should not be taken as any guarantee of the depth of the conversion... there are no two conversions alike... conversion is a unique personal experience.<sup>53</sup>

We do well, as we search for common factors in conversion, or between conversion and other psychological processes, to remember that the significant elements in any conversion experience may be those which are unique to the convert in question.

Many questions have been raised. Many suggestions have been made. I hope that these will give rise to rigorously conceived, meticulously executed research which will extend our knowledge of the psychology of conversion and isolate any features unique to Christian conversion which are amenable to investigation by such means.



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52. Allport, op. cit., p. 34
53. Norborg, op. cit., p. 196

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## THE VIEWPOINT OF A THEOLOGIAN

by

Rev. Harold Dekker

It is my responsibility to voice reaction as a theologian to Dr. Granberg's paper. I find this task to be one of unexpected difficulty. In fact, I am quite uncertain as to how I should get at it. To offer comment on selected points in Dr. Granberg's paper is clearly quite feasible. However, to give a theological critique of the paper as a whole becomes rather frustrating. For it seems to me that in its basic thrust it tends to elude a direct confrontation with Christian theology, even though it does deal measurably with phenomena of the Christian religion.

My difficulty can be stated plainly. If I had been asked to give a comment as a theologian on a paper by Dr. Granberg, or by anyone else, which was to deal with the psychology of conversion in the broadest sense I probably would have declined. For I would have felt, first, that this is outside the field of my competence and, second, that such a subject does not lend itself well to theological analysis except in terms of general apologetics.

This is substantially the situation I am now in. For Dr. Granberg has chosen to "swiftly reduce" the subject of his paper from "The Psychology of Christian Conversion" to simply "The Psychology of Conversion." In so doing he specifically rejects "the thesis that Christian conversion is an unique psychological phenomenon." He also states, "In this paper I shall regard 'conversion' as a psychological process, and argue that the uniqueness of Christian conversion is not found at the psychological level except for the cognitive (ideological) content...."

Perhaps those who planned the Convention program are satisfied that Dr. Granberg has remained sufficiently within the Convention theme. For myself, however, I must say that I regret his decision to "reduce" the subject. I believe we would have been better served with a paper specifically on Christian conversion. Moreover, I do not feel that the reasons given by Dr. Granberg for changing the subject are compelling. Though we concede that Christian conversion is not an altogether unique psychological phenomenon, Dr. Granberg himself admits that there is an element of uniqueness in cognitive content. The latter alone would have justified sticking with the original subject. But even if we further grant the consensus that "whatever uniqueness is present in Christian conversion does not inhere in the psychological processes" it does not follow that the subject of Christian conversion is excluded as a subject for psychological study. The psychology of Hindu conversion or of Communist conversion would likewise be valid and, under certain circumstances, profitable subjects for study. For our group of Christian psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, pastors, missionaries, etc. the original subject is not only valid but from the standpoint of our professional interest desirable. Something has been lost when that subject has been blunted and generalized as, not without cause, Dr. Granberg has chosen to do.

The difficulty of my assignment becomes still more evident when we observe that Dr. Granberg has not limited the scope of the subject even to religious conversion. He includes conversion to "free thought" and Communism, and he also

recognizes close parallels to psychopathology, artistic creativity and scientific discovery. He concludes that "the psychological phenomena of conversion are not unique to Christian conversion, they are not even unique to religious conversion. This may be true. Presumably such phenomena can also be found in a change of loyalty by a bobbysoxer from one film idol to another or in certain cases of a radical switch of political loyalties. However, when the subject is so circumscribed, a Christian theological critique is difficult to apply except also in the most general terms.

It seems clear that regardless of the validity of expanding the subject on the basis of psychological phenomenology, there is a proper place for close and careful study of Christian conversion from the psychological standpoint. Such study of selected conversion accounts in the Bible, of well-documented conversions in Christian history (Cf. Granberg's comment on Wesley), and of clinically observed conversion phenomena in our own day would well serve the cause of Christian scholarship and professional practice.

I am convinced that the Biblical material on this subject is psychologically more relevant and valuable than Dr. Granberg has recognized in his paper. A wealth of material is at hand. Consider a comparative study of Jacob and Esau -- their mutual relations, their relations to father and mother, their relations to society and their attitudes in later years, plus the striking development in Jacob of a protracted "gradual awakening" type of conversion with points of crisis culminating at the Jabbock. Would not all this afford an interesting and valuable study, not merely for the theologian but also, and in this case especially for the psychologist? A similar study might be done on Saul and David. Other possibilities are not hard to find. There is significant phenomenology pointing to basic underlying generalizations of extraordinary importance in the conversion experiences of Moses, Naaman, Peter, the woman of Samaria, the Ethiopian eunuch, Paul, the Philippian jailer, Lydia and Timothy. Negative cases such as Samson, Judas and Felix are also instructive. Obviously there are also numerous didactic passages in both the Old and the New Testament which bear on the psychology of conversion. Yet we find little use of Biblical data in Dr. Granberg's study. Surely the Bible is of great importance for the psychologist as psychologist and not merely for the theologian as theologian.

Even granting Dr. Granberg's inclusive delineation of the subject, Biblical materials would seem to deserve more attention than they receive. For instance, in the section on "Conversion and Personality Reorganization" we find only one passing Biblical reference. Would not Biblical instances of conversion and teaching regarding it have much to say about the effects of conversion on personality? And would this not have a normative character for us as Christians in addition to being scientifically relevant? Valuable as Dr. Granberg's treatment is here, it would be still more valuable if Biblical phenomena and criteria were adequately assimilated.

Dr. Granberg's last section on "Evaluating Conversion" is particularly helpful. Yet it must be recognized that Ames and Roberts do not represent our theological viewpoint and therefore their evaluations of conversion can not be accepted uncritically. Granberg rightly says that the "extensive catalogue of defects" given by Ames "deserves careful testing." He does not specify this testing. To me it seems clear that such testing must particularly recognize the criteria of Biblical phenomena and precept. Moreover, if Roberts holds that crisis conversion is an "indication of unhealthiness" and a "necessary evil",



we must be sure that these judgments are given a truly Biblical content before we can adopt them as our own. (Incidentally, when Granberg refers to the difficulty of Paul in convincing the disciples of the reality of his commitment to Christ it must be remembered that this was against the background of his persecuting activity). 'With respect to Ferm's claim that crisis conversion is general in the New Testament, Granberg offers a convincing answer from the New Testament data itself. This direct handling of Biblical phenomenology is illustrative of its relevance.

I have already alluded to the question of the authority of the Biblical data. That the Bible is authoritative for the Christian study of theology goes without saying. Is it authoritative also for the Christian study of psychology? If so, in what sense? Of course, if psychology is regarded as only a descriptive science the authority of the Bible is quite irrelevant. Then the Biblical phenomena and precepts are simply to be examined, classified and correlated with other data. The issue whether the Christian will regard psychology as a descriptive or a normative science is a moot one into which this brief comment can scarcely enter. However, it seems to me that as a Christian the psychologist can scarcely avoid the question as to what Christian norms apply to the human experience which he studies. So regardless whether he thinks a Christian psychology is possible, as a Christian he can not, it seems to me, avoid the issue of Christian norms. With respect to our present subject, then, the question is a proper one: What, psychologically speaking rather than merely theologically, are the norms for Christian conversion?

Take an example. Ames, as quoted by Dr. Granberg, speaks of "communions which have cultivated an elaborate technique" for producing conversion as a "sudden, intense, and extreme emotional experience" under "immediate, direct control and suggestion." Do not Biblical standards for the work of the Church and Biblical criteria for the nature of conversion invalidate and even condemn such ecclesiastical tactics? And is not psychology concerned to evaluate such tactics as well as to describe them? Granberg also notes Sargent's thesis that "for conversion to be effective, the subject may first have to have his emotions worked upon until he reaches an abnormal condition of anger, fear or exaltation," and that devices such as percussion rhythms, rhythmic movement, handclapping and chanting will facilitate a helpful hysteria. Granberg aptly points out that this thesis conflicts with the conversions of John Wesley and Arthur Koestler. But is it not even more important to ask whether it conflicts with Biblical norms? Likewise, when Granberg points out that in some groups behavioral automatisms such as shouting, uncontrolled laughter, convulsions or jumping are required to validate the conversion experience, the question obtrudes itself whether a requirement of this kind is under any circumstances valid.

Questions such as those raised in the foregoing paragraph are not merely for the theologian. In fact, they can not successfully be left to him. For the theologian is not competent to analyze properly the data as to its genuinely normative quality for our Christian life today. Christian norms can be ascertained and properly formulated only through a true understanding of Biblical phenomenology and teaching in actual historical and cultural context. Thereupon these norms must be applied to life today through the same kind of understanding. For this challenging task the scientific skills and resources of the

psychologist are needed as well as those of the theologian.

Miscellaneous items covered in Dr. Granberg's paper which call for treatment of this kind are the following: the definition of conversion and the incidence of its three modes, motives or needs which condition conversion, parental and family influences (Cf. the doctrine of the covenant), the contribution of repressed elements to conversion (e.g. Moses and Paul), the character of conversion as "unselfing", the factor of cognitive uniqueness, the involvement of psychopathology (Cf. demon possession), and the elements of the conscious and the unconscious in regeneration and conversion.

Dr. Granberg has given us a learned, highly instructive and stimulating discourse. Regrettably most of its valued assets are beyond the scope of this critique. I trust that his paper and the Convention as a whole will measurably advance our study of psychology from a Christian point of view, and that in due time a more specific correlation of the Biblical data on conversion can be accomplished in the interest of our common Christian task.



# THE VIEWPOINT OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

by

Ronald H. Rottschaffer, Ph.D.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

The concept of conversion has indeed been the source of varied controversies, particularly in the past 10 or 15 years. Perhaps this has been true because of the increased attention which this poignant topic has had forced upon it from such sources as evangelistic campaigns, journal publications, and various books. However, as Dr. Granberg has pointed out, conversion is still relatively a "dormant issue" despite the controversy which it has engendered. May I add that I, too, share his hope that this convention will re-awaken an interest in a topic once so prominent in religious circles.

I am reminded of a story that may help clarify to you the point at which we who view conversion seem to be standing today. This story concerns a fellow who was the victim of an unfortunate accident in which he lost his sight. After long and careful study, a group of learned doctors decided they could restore his sight by performing a very delicate operation. The man consented, the operation was performed, the sight was restored, but, the man had lost his memory. The doctors were most distressed at this turn of events and quickly operated again; this operation restored the man's memory, but now his sight was gone again. After further consultation and again with the consent of the patient, a third operation was tried with exactly the same results as the first--sight was restored, but memory was gone. Further consultations were called. After much pondering, the doctors approached the patient again and offered their pronouncement, "Sir," they said, "before we can proceed you must answer a question for us. Would you rather see where you're going, or know where you've been?"

Perhaps we too, must decide "What do we wish to know?" as we consider the concept of conversion. Heretofore almost exclusively a theological construct, conversion has now been challenged by the behavioral sciences, and not without a certain degree of tension, as Dr. Granberg has accurately noted.

I would like to share with you some of my reactions to Dr. Granberg's paper from the standpoint of the psychologist in the dual role of both a scientist and a clinician.

## II. THE PSYCHOLOGIST AS A SCIENTIST

Viewing conversion as a scientist, the psychologist engages in certain activities to best understand the concept itself. These activities include not only observation, experimentation, and data analysis, but also enterprises such as definition of terms and construction of an explanatory system. As a starting point, the psychologist may attempt to delimit the subject matter to be considered. This Dr. Granberg has done very appropriately by stating that he considers conversion as a "psychological process (which is) largely the same as those in certain other personality activities." (p.2) In so doing, he seems to be describing conversion as a behavior; as such conversion can thus be studied by the behavioral scientist as well as the theologian.

By denoting conversion as a behavior involving various qualities, e.g. "1) an illumination of relative suddenness, 2) change of intention, 3) integration of personality, and so on, Dr. Granberg perhaps has touched some very sensitive spots of those who would hold that conversion is something mysterious ephemeral and even holy. This has happened before, I can remember, for example, the righteous wrath of the good brethren in Grand Rapids churches against Calvin College's chemist Dr. John DeVries as he suggested certain organic findings from the physical sciences which seemed to contradict existing interpretations from Scripture. Others too, for example, Dr. Don Bouma in sociology and Dr. Carl Andre in physics have paid the price of rejection. Why? Because they organized human observations in a little different manner than did certain segments of the church. But, as I remarked a few moments ago in my story about the blind man, we must decide what we want to know about conversion. We are now suggesting that conversion is a behavioral phenomenon. By doggedly maintaining that conversion is something unique to religion and, in particular, to the Christian religion, perhaps we would run the risk of neither "seeing where we are going nor knowing what we are doing." Indeed, means such as scientific experimentation, professional discussion and thoughtful appraisal are justified by their end product,--knowledge.

Dr. Granberg seems to have amassed an impressive collection of facts to support his notion that conversion, as a behavior, is not unique to the Christian religion, or even to religion itself. As a psychologist, I, too, have noted the variety of stimuli which can set the human organism into intense self-examination and re-organization. I also cannot therefore label such behaviors as necessarily involving conversion. For example, when a financial threat prompts an individual 1) to react with shock, 2) to become suddenly illuminated, 3) to change his intentions, and so on, so that he re-invests his money or vocational skills into another line, then I, as a scientist observing behavior, add nothing to my understanding of human behavior by saying that the man was "converted". Unless I spell out the particular behaviors included under the construct "conversion," and in what context they are used; I have difficulty in communicating to others what I mean. This poor communication has plagued progress not only in the sciences but also in the humanities. In fact, perhaps one of the greatest obstacles in the way of promoting the brotherhood of man has been this breakdown in communication.

"Conversion", then, I would hold as a term which can be legitimately utilized by anyone, biologist, chemist, economist, anthropologist, psychologist, theologist--by anyone. As scientists, we must insist upon a clarification of terms and propositions. In conclusion, therefore, I whole-heartedly agree with Dr. Granberg's insistence that the term "conversion" is not unique to religious experience. I would only add that to relate conversion directly to a Christian experience that one merely add the name of "Christ" in one's definition. This automatically enables us to communicate since it rules out both non-religious and non-Christian forms of conversion.

As a scientist I would also like to commend Dr. Granberg for daring to submit a rather subjective experience such as Christian conversion to the objective rigors of experimentation. Perhaps the undisciplined mind would criticize him for having exposed a religious event to the tests of science and perhaps, too, for his insistence upon laboratory precision. Yet, we need only to remind such critics that it was not too long ago that the church burned those at the stake who dared question other "know truths"--that the earth was flat, or the Ptolemaic view that the sun revolved about the earth. At a time when the need for facilitating conversion to Christ is so crucial we must beware lest our steps forward be thwarted by a bevy of pet theories and unvalidated biases, familiar roadblocks indeed, in every science.



To summarize my views of Dr. Granberg's paper from the standpoint of the psychologist as a scientist, I must agree with him that the term "conversion" itself implies neither a religious event nor even a Christian experience; I must commend him for daring to expose a some-what mystical and heretofore almost exclusively theological construct to the rigors of the experimental method. Finally, I would agree that the behaviors involved in the act of conversion are much the same as seen in other situations when a process of personality change is involved.

### III. THE PSYCHOLOGIST AS A CLINICIAN

I would now like to ramble a bit viewing a Christian conversion from the vantage point of the psychologist as a Clinician. Using the word "conversion" in the broad sense, one could probably define most human beings as being potential converts to some thing or another. And yet one is also impressed with the fact that relatively few of our species ever experience much of a conversion to anything, let alone to Christianity. The student of human interactions often is struck by the tenacity with man seems to cling to the secure, the known, the routine, the norm--rarely permitting himself the freedom of exploring the unknown, the unique, the different, to any significant extent. Chisolin's comment seems to suggest why this is true. He states, "Before any new order can be defined the absolute power of the established, the hold upon us of what we know we are, must be broken." Human, progressive movement then comes by effort to break the hold of the status quo. As Fromm so eloquently described it in his book, Escape From Freedom, man fears the anxiety thrust upon him when he attempts to break away and find independence and creativity.

In attempting to understand the conditions under which man becomes converted to anything, the clinician asks, "What are the relevant antecedents of conversion?" Coe and Startuck (p.8) on the one hand suggest that those who are converted to Christianity are "dependent and emotionally immature persons who were highly suggestible, given to self-dramatization, strong enthusiasms, warmth of nature, and tending to identify strongly with others, especially with authority figures." Conklin (p.8) adds that there is a quasi-neurotic personality organization in converts. On the other hand we have the suggestions of Chislin, Fromm, and others who suggest that artistic creativity parallels the conversion experience.

Here, then, is an apparent dilemma. On one side there is the suggestion that conversion resembles creativity and independence--two relatively acceptable signs of maturity; on the other side, however, some seem to indicate the emotional and personal immaturity and even neurotic-like qualities of converts. In essence, there seems to be the implication that you have to be slightly neurotic to be converted; but if you are converted, it is a sign of productive creativity.

I'm not sure of the solution to this riddle except to say that it might have been avoided by shying from the use of labels--a problem which has plagued many of the sciences. Instead, Coe, Starbuck, Conklin, and the rest might have spelled out more thoroughly the particular kind of conversion referred to, "Crisis or "gradual", and also whether their subjects exhibited neurotic-like behaviors or were actually in a state of neurosis. One wonders, too, about the controls used. Where there non-converts who exhibited neurotic-like behaviors and actual converts, who did not? Dr. Granberg also asks whether the tensions experienced during a religious crisis and acute psychosis are only distinguishable on the basis of outcome. He suggests that possibly there is a difference in both frequency and content of hallucinations and delusions. As a clinician, I feel that he has certainly raised a legitimate question--one which later researchers might explore more fully.

Several references were made in this morning's speech toward explaining the psychology of Christian conversion in terms of self-theory. One writer, for example, saw conversion as primarily an "unselfing". Dr. Granberg explained "unselfing" as the shattering of one's self-concept followed by the formation of a new one--one which shifts the patterns of ego-involvement. I'm not sure I can agree with the idea that there is a "shattering" of one's self-concept in conversion. It may be threatened and may even require a rather drastic revision, but the thought of a shattered self-concept leaves me feeling that the convert becomes the victim of something akin to the lifeless vegetation of the catatonic. That there is a shifting in ego-involvement is much more obvious, particularly in crisis-conversion, where the convert now interprets his experiential data in light of God's teachings. This is often a beautiful experience for the person himself and also for those who observe him. There seems to be a spiritual exuberance, a dramatic closeness with God which so alters the person's behaviors that both he and others remark at the change, the productivity, the happiness. Truly a genuine "unselfing" is something to be sought after even by those long converted, but frequently forgetful of to whom such conversion has been made. No doubt the psychotherapists among us also know what I have felt when a client gradually begins to "unself" in therapy,--to reorganize his data in terms of a new and healthier frame of reference. This joy I'm sure our ministers among us have sensed also when their spiritual counsel has assisted an individual's changing of attitudes and mannerism both toward God and his fellow man.

As a clinician I would view the change which occurs during genuine Christian conversion as being a process, not something instantaneous or even relatively brief. If we, in fact, can envision the Holy Spirit as working within man's heart, gradually wooing him as a chosen one of Christ's, we perhaps too can recognize the nature of conversion as the process of change. This does not mean, of course, that there cannot be a sudden, crisis-type dramatic experience of turning. Neither does it mean that a process of change is an absolute prerequisite for conversion. (Remember the thief on the cross.) Nor does it mean that the pseudo-conversion experiences of an emotion-filled moment are signs of fruitful change in values. Perhaps many evangelists will readily attest to this fact. Many therapists can relate incidences of "pseudo-cure" where a reported change for the better turned out to be a prelude to even stormier experiences. Perhaps, then, genuine conversion can best be evaluated over time, adhering to Christ's criterion, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

True conversion, whether in a religious context, in psychotherapy, or in any other sphere is probably not easily come by. Both cognitive and conative factors are undoubtedly involved in Christian conversion as they are in the conversions experienced in psychotherapy. That a person experiences a frequent need for revival or renewed emotional impulse may denote an incomplete or shallow conversion experience to start with. Too, it may show an absence of cognitive understanding so that frequent reinforcement is desirable. As a clinician I'm somewhat hesitant to put a value judgment on one form of conversion experience as opposed to another. Often the person who needs frequent emotional experience in his religion is somewhat less gifted intellectually. But one wonders whether this is any less desirable than the more intelligent convert who gradually has found Christ but whose life reflects perhaps an under-emotionality--a lack of spiritual vitality. I share Dr. Granberg's feeling that perhaps the most significant criterion for "religious genius" is the ability to direct the results of (the conversion) experience constructively upon the individual, the Christian community and the non-Christian world. (p.23) Indeed, the value of Christian conversion lies not in the act itself but the "life-style" it sets in motion.



In conclusion, I would like to raise a question which is of interest to me both as a Christian and as a clinician--how do we best facilitate the turning to Christ of our fellow man? I often find that those who have turned away from Christianity have done so not because of the message, but the method used in conveying it. Is there not room for us to consider the person in search or in need of Christ somewhat like we treat client's in therapy. I can often see a gross similarity between the potential convert to better spiritual health and the potential convert to better emotional health. In therapy we respect the worth and dignity of the individual as he strives toward improvement. Our message thus becomes one of respect, care, acceptance, freedom for exploration, encouragement,--love, is you will. I must confess that too often my approach to the non-Christian has been one of argumentative persuasion carried on in an atmosphere of superiority, annoyance, rigidity, bias, and rejection. Perhaps there is a need for evaluating and formulating our approach to the prospective convert much the same as we have in our concern for the prospective client. Certainly the winning of a soul to Christ outside of the formal therapeutic setting is of far more value than the changing of personal adjustment within therapy.



## THE VIEWPOINT OF AN EDUCATOR

by

Dean A. F. Broman

Acknowledgment should be made of Dr. Granberg's self-imposed limitation of his subject by entitling his paper "a preface." He further limits the scope of his discussion by stating, "I reject the thesis that Christian conversion is an unique psychological phenomenon". Furthermore, he states, "I intend to use it (the word conversion) most often in connection with a crisis-type of religious awakening". Within this narrowed scope of discussion he concluded "the data we have considered point to the fact that conversion is needed wherever major obstacles exist to the smooth induction into the Christian life".

The specific emphasis which Dr. Granberg makes is best indicated by his own words, "In this paper I shall regard 'conversion' as a psychological process, and argue that the uniqueness of Christian conversion is not found at the psychological level, except for the cognitive (ideological) content; and that the psychological activities are largely the same as those in certain other personality activities." His broad outline of development contains the following four subjects: (1) forces contributing to conversion, (2) effects on the personality, (3) conversion and related psychological processes, (4) the evaluation of conversion as he described it.

In discussing the forces contributing to conversion I believe Dr. Granberg omits a very important point in his discussion of the subject of "Motives of Conversion". However strong may be the psychological characteristics of "insecurity, fear of death, love, gratitude, desire for social approval or esteem, submissiveness, a sense of sin, the search for a unifying life principle," there is the solemn reverent fear that comes from the discovery of separation from God, which often constitutes the most impelling motive in seeking Christian conversion. This motive alone has caused some to risk social ostracization or banishment from home or even death itself. Such a motive can exist apart from any distorted or unhealthy understanding or concept of God or man's relation to God.

Dr. Granberg gives due consideration to the following important "factors in crisis conversion": (1) expectations, (2) parental beliefs, (3) and personality factors (at some length). His discussion of the effects of conversion on personality reorganization is a clear and good summary of factual material. However, in speaking of "Rescue Mission" conversions he concludes that there must be "almost a complete overhauling of the personality" of many of the converts; also, "whether these cases may not be as much the product of repression as conversion". It would have been well to characterize the reorganization that takes place in the personalities of some genuine converts.

In the section on "Conversion and Related Psychological Processes", he gives emphasis on his thesis that "the uniqueness of Christian conversion is not found at the Psychological level, except for the cognitive (ideological) content; and that the psychological activities are largely the same as those in certain other personality activities." This may be true generally but not entirely. There are unique characteristics in Christian conversions. Much factual data is referred

to, which are the findings of many well-known students of psychology. Dr. Granberg records an important distinction between "conversion" and "regeneration". I quote Grensted "The Psychology of Religion" (p.76): "We cannot make any judgement as to the reality of an alleged conversion...by any consideration of the form which it may have taken. In some religious traditions...there has been a strong emphasis upon the necessity of conversion as sudden and final... But this factor of suddenness and apparent completeness is strictly psychological and not religious. There is no reason whatever for supposing that the same result of integration in a new loyalty may not be reached by a slow process of growth quite as surely as by one overwhelming experience of reorientation. The newly established disposition must vindicate itself by what it is and what it does, and not by reference to the behaviour-pattern within which it came into being."

In discussing conversion as "universal" and in discussing it in relation to psychopathology, Dr. Granberg follows the emphasis that many other scholars do by pointing to the similarities found in other conversions to those found in Christian conversions. He rightly goes on to ask, "May there not be a difference in the frequency of hallucinations and automatisms and in the content of hallucinations? What about general ability to function during the period of stress? Bunyan and Fox seemed to go about their business with reasonable effectiveness in spite of their disturbed state." Dr. Grensted says something similar on the same subject matter - illustrative material: "They are especially distinguished from the hysterical or dissociated type by the fact that they are very largely aware of the conflict within themselves and are trying to solve it at the conscious level by a rational and voluntary decision." It seems to me there is need to emphasize the fact that in many Christian conversions the crises and conflicts arise from the existence of an antithesis to the Christian life in the previously evil or ungodly life coming into juxtaposition with the newly awakened sense of the presence of God. Christian conversion results from the application of the Gospel of Christ, assuring the seeker and convert that by the grace of God the evil causes of this conflict will be removed and that divine power will aid the reorganization and rehabilitation of his life. It seems to me that in this context can be placed Dr. Granberg's quotation from Dr. Mowrer: "Where neurosis and psychosis is purely functional (as it usually is), the individual, I believe, always has a hidden history of a serious misconduct which has not been adequately compensated and 'redeemed'. And if this be so, then confession, expiation, and a 'new life in Christ' (or some equivalent type of conversion) have a practical pertinence which far exceeds the boundaries behind which some theologians have attempted to hold them".

There is need of more reference to the theological implications because we are discussing "christian" conversion, which requires some acknowledgment of God's purpose in His relation to man. Dr. Jaarsma in his paper, "Human Development, Learning, and Teaching" speaks of turning to the Scriptures, "for authentic facts about man as a being. God as Creator of all is the only source for truth about man as being." Christian conversion, as distinguished from other types of conversion experience, is not necessarily getting out of social trouble and its concomitant psychological characteristics, but rather a reconciliation with an holy God and its concomitant psychological characteristics.

It is important in our discussion of the psychology of Christian conversion to give recognition now to the psychological characteristics and activities that result from the acceptance of redemption by the grace of God with assurances

that come from faith in the promises of the Word of God. There is also the sense of a new beginning in life, best described in the Apostle Paul's words, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away, behold they are become new." (II Cor. 5:17 R.V.). Also, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:16, 17 R.V.). There is also the sense of hope for a larger fulfillment of life in such an heritage, for Christ said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." (John 10:10 R.V.). There are some other psychological characteristics of a genuine Christian conversion, but these suffice to illustrate the distinctives in Christian conversion in contrast to other types.

I see great benefits coming out of this kind of study and investigation in helping Christians to understand the conversion experience. Also, it should result in improved procedures in personally aiding individuals who are seeking to experience a true Christian conversion.



## THE VIEWPOINT OF A CHAPLAIN

by

Dr. Elton J. Holtrop

First of all, I wish to express my appreciation for the scientific and thought provoking paper of Dr. Granberg. He mentioned that his paper is not specifically on "The Psychology of Christian Conversion," but on, "A Preface to the Psychology of Christian Conversion." For this, I am sorry, since the entire theme of the Convention is built around the assigned subject. However, I do feel that Dr. Granberg accomplished what he set out to do, namely, to present a survey of existing thought on the psychology of conversion, which he states need not be religious nor Christian, sharing with us the results of an interesting pilot research conducted at Hope College, and pointing out to us several areas of needed research.

It seems to me that this paper deals primarily with the psychology of conversion, rather than with the psychology of Christian conversion. This conclusion is born out by a statement found at the bottom of the first page where we read, "You will note that what appears in the title of this paper as "Christian conversion" has been swiftly reduced to "conversion." This indicates that I reject the thesis that Christian conversion is an unique psychological phenomenon." Then, on the next page we read, "In this paper I shall regard "conversion" as a psychological process, and argue that the uniqueness of Christian conversion is not found at the psychological level, except for the cognitive (ideological) content; and that the psychological activities of conversion are largely the same as those in certain other personality activities."

The author apparently accepts E. T. Clark's classification of religious conversion as consisting of three types, namely, a gradual awakening which is a process of growing; an emotional stimulus where the emotional element is light if it is there at all, and, the definite crisis type which involves strong emotions and a radical change. According to Clark, the gradual awakening type is about ten times as prevalent as the crisis type of conversion, yet, Dr. Granberg limits his paper by discussing the less prevalent one, namely, the crisis type of conversion.

In dealing with conversion, the author points out three fairly recognizable stages, the first being a period of disturbance, a conviction of sin, a sense of incompleteness where the person is definitely restless, anxious and depressed; the second being the conversion crisis in which there usually is a sense of surrender, a sudden sense of illumination which dispels doubt giving a new sense of relatedness; and the third stage giving a sense of release which issues a new life pattern. I would say that these three stages are also generally found in all types of Christian conversion.

Even though we may find a great deal of similarity between purely psychological conversion and true Christian conversion, yet, it appears to me that we must make a fundamental distinction. There is something permanent and vital in Christian conversion that we do not find in any non-Christian conversion. I am referring to regeneration which is the work of the Holy Spirit by which He plants the new life into the subconscious depths of the individual. It is this which gives permanency to Christian conversion. A non-regenerated person may experience psychological or even religious conversion, but never Christian conversion. Regeneration is an act

of God apart from the will of man. This new life is a gift of God. Without this regeneration, we can never have Christian conversion. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again," and, "unless a man is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." John 3:3,7.

If the implantation of this new life into the subconscious depths of the personality is the work of God and of God alone, does man stand helplessly by and simply wait for the operation of the Holy Spirit? In other words, does God also use means that influence the depraved soul of man? Certainly God works directly upon the personality of man as we clearly see in infant regeneration, but, when Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," He immediately presented the gospel message to Nicodemus. John said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John 5:1. To believe that Jesus is the Christ a man must first receive the gospel. Peter states, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but, of incorruptible, by the word of God." 1 Peter 1:23.

Since then God often does use the gospel to bring about regeneration the clergymen are faced with the great challenge to prayfully and diligently present the gospel as the only, but, the sure way of salvation to the unsaved or unregenerated.

The gospel should be brought tactfully. We should bear in mind that every man is an image bearer of God, and thus has a religious spark, no matter how much hostility he may manifest toward God's message of salvation. We should never lose hope, nor should we press the depraved sinner into a corner by our logic. Human nature can usually be led but rarely driven. God works from within the heart of man. It is our duty to touch that heart with the message of the gospel, praying that God may be pleased to use this as a means to bring about the implantation of the new life into the subconscious regions of the personality. If regenerated, an adult sinner will eventually experience a true Christian conversion.

We believe that the source of motives, desires, thoughts and actions is the subconscious depths of the personality. Since regeneration takes place at the subconscious level, the well-spring of motives, desires, thoughts and actions is affected. The subconscious affects the conscious. Thus we can look for a transformation in a person that has been regenerated.

This transformation bears with it certain psychological effects. Thus regeneration will affect the entire personality. Since only the regenerated person can experience Christian conversion, it seems logical to me that the psychology of Christian conversion must differ from the psychology of all other types of conversion. In general, psychologists admit that they are not able to penetrate into the hidden depths of the subconscious, the heart of the personality from which Christian conversion springs. This does not make Christian conversion unscientific. It simply shows that there are depths which have not and possibly can not be penetrated by scientific investigation.

In Christian conversion, the new life principle implanted within the subconscious level passes into the conscious level and becomes consciously active. This new life principle is permanent. The regenerated person never ceases to be a child of God. He may wander far from God but final apostasy is impossible for him. This is not true for non-Christian conversion hence it seems to me there is a fundamental psychological difference between Christian conversion and non-Christian conversion.



The three stages mentioned by Dr. Granberg in psychological conversion can also be applied to Christian conversion.

The first stage-the conviction of sin in the individual-may have many degrees of intensity ranging from one of extreme despair to one of a mild feeling of having fallen short of God's moral standards. This degree of intensity may be determined by temperament, by the spirit of the times, by parental training, or by one's theological conceptions of God. It may also be a combination of all of these. For instance, the law of God has a negative, a prohibitive aspect which may lead to strict discipline and rigid teachings of an ascetic nature. People brought up in an extremely legalistic atmosphere often suffer tortures of self-accusation and self-condemnation. These intense feelings of guilt are often experienced during the period of adolescence. But the law of God also has a positive side which corresponds to the ideal-self, the kind of person one would like to be, the goal toward which he is striving. Thus a person may experience a vague feeling of need. For some, life seems to lack aim, purpose and color. Their earthly aims do not satisfy even though they may be attained. The man with a million dollars isn't satisfied. He still wants more. Others may be driven by the fear of a righteous God who punishes sin. They want to be released from this misery. Regardless of what may cause the sense of uneasiness, of emptiness, of conviction of sin, the clergyman is faced with a great challenge and with a tremendous responsibility. He should try to understand the causes of these pre-conversion experiences which depend upon a number of factors, such as, temperament, the parental attitude toward God, the teachings in his school and church, his environment during early years, and the kinds of religious experiences he has had. All people have not the same type of pre-conversion experiences. A clergyman's task is to make careful inquiry about these symptoms and, then, apply that aspect of the gospel which is pertinent. It may be the love of God, the way of reconciliation, the hope of salvation, the purpose of life, or any other aspect of the gospel that this particular soul needs at the time. Here lies our challenge. Each man needs individual help. This is our difficult task.

The pre-conversion conflicts are resolved by conversion itself-the second fairly recognizable stage, Dr. Granberg mentioned. This may be a sudden dramatic crisis or it may be a gradual process. It may display extreme feelings of an emotional extrovert, as the jailer of Philippi who was thrown into a panic by an earthquake and who would have killed himself had he not been prevented by Paul, or it may be more intellectually controlled by the temperament of the thinking introvert, as a Lydia who calmly accepted the gospel and worshipped God. We find both these types illustrated in Acts 16.

According to Earnest White, an English doctor and psychiatrist, the emotional crisis of Christian conversion is relieved by the resolution of the conflict, by surrender to God. This is the third stage, according to White of Christian conversion. The penitent realizing that he can no longer cope with his problems by suppressing or fighting them, throws himself and his problems upon the mercies of God through faith in Christ. The Christian doctrine of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross enables him to believe that his problem of sin and guilt has been adequately met and sufficiently atoned. There is no longer a barrier between him and God. He has a sense of harmonious fellowship with God. He is touched by the sacrifice of Christ in his behalf. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God has become central in his life. Doubts and fears vanish in the light of the new assurance of salvation which he enjoys. Certain things which formerly seemed important, now, cease to interest him. He sees things from a different point of



view. He changes from being self-centered to being God-centered. His primary question now is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

This person's outlook upon life undergoes a radical change. He enters upon a new life with new ambitions and new hopes which center in the will and purpose of God. There is an emergence of materials from the subconscious regions. All his mental patterns have been rearranged. In effect, the whole conscious personality undergoes a process of change resulting in the re-direction of life's aims. The spirit of God which in regeneration entered and permeated the subconscious depths has now taken over the conscious life of the individual. This affects the entire personality-the will, the emotions and the intellect.

Thus Christian conversion has a deeper content than non-Christian conversion. The act of self-surrender implies a consciousness of the will of God. This has eternal value.

Christian conversion is not an end in itself, nor does it imply that a person has attained his aim in life. A man's conversion is the conscious beginning of putting off the old man, of fleeing from sin and of striving toward holiness. It is the beginning of the conscious process of sanctification in which the converted sinner plays an important role, although he will never attain perfection in this life. His course is often rough and disappointing. He must constantly fight against his depraved nature which permeates his conscious and subconscious life. Even Paul, years after his conversion complained, "the good that I would, I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do.---I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but, I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringin me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Romans 7:19-23. This the converted Christian will also experience. He may drift, stumble or fall, but, the new life in time will reassert itself and will persist into eternity.

The converted Christian must be guided in his process of sanctification by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. He must be encouraged to faithfully use the means of grace, God's Word and the Holy Sacraments. He must become active in the work of God's Kingdom. For this he needs the direction and guidance of the clergymen.

It is possible to distinguish a Christian conversion from a religious or merely a psychological conversion? Christ states, "Not every one who saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father in heaven." Matthew 7:21. Good works therefore is an earmark of Christian conversion. "By their works ye shall know them," certainly applies to Christian conversion. Besides this, every person who experiences true Christian conversion has a natural impulse to pray. He wants to communicate with his heavenly Father. Then, he naturally wishes others to know the way of salvation and to have the knowledge of Christ. This is too good to keep to himself. He is mission minded. Furthermore, he will seek the community to Christians where he can worship with them. These are good works.

Life grows toward whatever it truly reaches to obtain. The whole life of the Christian convert is God-centered. He seeks God's glory, which is his life's goal. Here, also, it is the challenge and the task of the clergymen to tactfully direct him and to help him to obtain that goal.

## THE VIEWPOINT OF A PSYCHIATRIST

by

Stuart Bergsma, M. D.

Dr. Granberg's survey of existing thought concerning the psychology of conversion, his own pilot study, and his pointing out of areas for further needed research, have resulted in a scholarly paper evidencing great investigation, thorough analysis, and all based on a large bibliography of pertinent sources.

I am asked as a psychiatrist to give my reactions to this erudite paper. My first reaction is to the reduction of the title from "The Psychology of Christian Conversion" to simply "Conversion" by deletion of the word "Christian." Dr. Granberg states: "I reject the thesis that Christian conversion is an unique, psychological phenomenon." I do realize Dr. Granberg sees Christian conversion as possessing unique features, which unique features, he states, are not in the psychological realm, except for its ideological thought content, but he also maintains "the psychological activities of conversion are largely the same as those in certain other personality activities."

I am also keeping in mind our speaker's dealing further with the question: "Is conversion unique to Christianity?" in the middle of his paper. This, of course, may be readily answered by saying. "No, conversion is not unique to Christianity", for one may rightly speak of conversion, defined as, "turning about", "a change of mind", "a repentance", in such religions as Islam, Hinduism, Budhism, communism, and psychoanalysis.

I would like, at this point, to consider conversion as it applies to two modern day disciplines mentioned in Dr. Granberg's paper, psychoanalysis and communistic brain washing, in order to show that Christian conversion is so unique that when we apply the term "conversion" to certain of these other "religions" we realize we are at times in the realm of the bizarre, the de-humanizing of man; we are aware of the resorting to techniques at times destructive to the personality even if the techniques are only temporarily used; in short, we are often in the realm of the "unchristian" and even in the realm of the "anti-Christian". I will first consider psychoanalysis.

All psychotherapeutic methods are attempts at human conversion using human methods, whether that psychotherapy be merely the supportive and persuasive psychotherapy of the marriage counsellor; or whether that of the psychologist and psychiatrist trained to deal chiefly with subconscious or conscious verbalizing; or whether it be the so-called dynamic psychotherapy of the therapist trained to seek constantly for the dynamics back of the mental aberrations; or if it be the psychotherapy of the psychoanalyst trained in the most profound investigations of the unconscious in man; - - all methods of psychotherapy are attempts at conversion, are conversion techniques. They are all based on the proposition: Words and attitudes and acts have hurt this person; words have hurt; words can now heal. Unfortunately, even the words of the therapist can fail to heal, may even cause harm, may deepen the wound, may make it almost impossible for a later therapist to heal the patient.

The psychoanalyst especially aims at making the unconscious conscious. He knows there are deep wounds, perhaps going way back to childhood, wounds covered



over by a defense mechanism in the disturbed psyche, especially that defense mechanism used by every man, woman, and child, namely repression. Covered over, these wounds still fester, they break open and have draining symptoms. The patient does not consciously know, he is not aware of the original psychic traumata. His unconscious has stored up the memory carefully nevertheless, being covered by repression.

The psychoanalyst has as one of his tasks the surfacing of these repressed ideas. The analyst uses a specific setting for this, he uses specific methods of his own, and he uses verbal productions which the patient will not give except under these conditions of therapy, for strong resistances prevent the patient from divulging what is going on in the dark cellar of his unconscious. These resistances must be first overcome, and later analyzed by the psychoanalyst.

The setting devised by Sigmund Freud, father of all psychoanalysis, is one which promotes another defense mechanism, regression. The patient reclines on a couch, which is an ideal position in which to relax and to regress back toward childhood. The patient ordinarily is facing away from the therapist, he does not see him, he is urged to pay no attention to him, and the therapist often remains almost silent for the entire therapy hour of fifty minutes. The analyst often offers no comments except an occasional non-committal grunt or minimal steering of the direction of the verbalizing of the patient.

The patient free-associates, that is, he says whatever comes to his mind, and is urged to keep nothing back. He rambles on from one thing to another like climbing the trunk of a tree at first, onward from major limb to lesser limb until he suddenly may be aware that he is off on some dangerously small branch. He wonders how he got there, he never intended to tell the therapist this item, in fact he did not remember it, hence he may block and may refuse to go on for a time. Blockings, evasions, etc., are often very significant.

The patient's psyche actually consciously remembers nothing of what he has long ago repressed, but he does none-the-less reproduce it in this setting more and more as he regresses into childhood and infancy. He relives finally the traumatic incident, he reproduces it in his own words and behavior, and he now has a chance to relive this very sore spot more adequately and more satisfactorily and without traumas than he did in childhood. His ego has actually been re-exposed to the old conflicts which have been reactivated in psychoanalysis. By skillful help of the analyst at this point of the therapy the analysand finds new solutions to the festering conflicts.

Regression is essential for this on the part of the analysand. Regression, intentionally, deliberately produced is a dehumanizing mechanism, an almost psychotic mechanism. The analyst is supposed to maintain neutrality. This neutrality is impossible, of course, for a new relationship called a transference has developed between the analysand and the therapist. It is not only a relationship of rapport and of trust and of love. It is a relationship in which past events are confused with the present events in the analysand's mind. Some past person such as the traumatizing parent is confused now with the analyst, in fact identified with him. Reality testing is thus tremendously disturbed. The analysand's superego or conscience factor is displaced on to the therapist. The aim of all this is the slow, progressive establishment of a new superego or conscience in this setting by slow introjection of the analyst.

All this has to be resolved, after many months, perhaps even years of psychoanalytic therapy, by skillful manipulation of the therapist. But it is apparent



how tremendous is the analyst's hold on the analysand, so that many patients scarcely dare to do any important thing for months at a time without consulting their analyst. The authoritarian role of the analyst is very evident in this, his power over the psyche is great, it is an assuming almost of a role of a god toward that patient by a therapist who often believes there is no God.

The end results sought in all this is a conversion, a conversion in which man, (the patient), is often "recreated", not in the image of God, but rather in the image of his own human, faulty, sinful ego ideal, or in the image of his therapist.

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It is often very disturbing to us as Christians, it engenders a guilt complex in us, that a comparison dare even be made between Christian conversion and other types of conversion such as psychoanalysis and the conversion called brain washing. Dr. Granberg, in the section "Conversion and Brain Washing" in his paper, quotes and comments on brain washing as explained by William Sargent in his book, "Battle for the Mind". Brain washing also is rightly to be considered under the heading of "conversion" for, as in psychoanalysis, the agents behind these attempts at reorganization of personality, the communists attempting their so-called "thought reform" or "brain washing", are agents aiming at a "turning about" of that error-filled mind, aiming at a "repentance" of that misguided soul, aiming in short at a radical "conversion" of that life.

Psychoanalysis and brain washing and Christian conversion have this in common, that all three use the human psyche, the human mind, as their arena of action. All three use the cognitive, affective, and volitional realms of the mind of the man or woman or child to "be converted" to produce their psychological effects.

Communism, for example, uses an enormous amount of words- words spoken, words printed, words repeated over and over-to impress upon the cognitive realm of the mind of the candidate for conversion the message of communism. There is a verbal demand that the person confess his crimes against the communistic order. The crimes are unnamed but sinister crimes are implied with the demand, "Confess! Confess! Confess!"

There is the impact on the affective part of his psyche, the terror of the demand that he confess unknown and unspecified crimes, or else---. There is the emotional reaction of the "strong wind" of verbal abuse and physical abuse with its lowering of the feeling of human dignity, the undermining of the ego, the implantation of guilt feelings. There are the "earthquakes" of betrayals by cell mates, even by members of his own household. There is solitary confinement and then the questionings resumed under intense light. There is the deprivation of sleep. There is the "fire" of persecution, the threats of harm to his family members. There are the rays of hope if he will but confess to any small misdeed; there is the use of this white lie confessed then, to entangle him all the more. There is the promise of leniency as the breaking point nears, if he will but bend the knee and the neck to communism. There is a slow disintegration of character, the relinquishing of all former ideology or else perish. There is the re-indoctrination with hopes of a new era ahead.

The confession is now ready-made before him to sign. The cognitive or intellectual realm of his mind, the affective or emotional realm of his psyche, have already surrendered. The volitional part of the psyche cooperates; he signs. He

now actually believes in the confession he has made, he believes in communism, he is now a convert to communism, and acts thereafter as a loyal member and a propagandist of the same.

We, in America, have received newspaper accounts of such brain washings of some of our G. I's in Korea by the communists. We have read of high ranking, intellectual, brainy, brilliant, capable officers perhaps, men of integrity, signing a confession that they have been spies of our government.

"How are the mighty fallen", we say. "How did this come about? Could this have been prevented?"

Yes, this could have been prevented. I heard a lecturer at a great university say that our United States government had given one simple rule to all its soldiers, which rule, if one had the inner fortitude to be able to follow it, would have made brain washing impossible. The rule required OBEDIENCE. Obey one order, namely: "Give absolutely no more information than the law requires of you in warfare. International law requires only that you give your name, your rank, and your army company; only these may be demanded of you. No more may be demanded of you by law." The brain washed men all fell through disobedience. They told more than was required, perhaps things about their family, their wife, their children, their birth, their life incidents. Their subtle foe used this information against them, asked the same questions over and over, compared small differences in their answers, confused them, said they were lying, pitted one G. I. against another, compelled them to continue giving new answers with which to trip them once again.

Behold the fall of man through DISOBEDIENCE.

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Do we need to feel anxious when Christian conversion is compared to such conversions as the above?

"But we use some of the same techniques that they are using", some Christians say anxiously. "Is not our Reformed approach authoritarian? Do we not put moral pressure upon people at times, do we not insist on a very strict structuring of our message and the responses of inquirers and our catechumens? Do we not scare some into the kingdom of heaven by hell fire doctrines? Are we not imposing our ideology on others? Do we not, at times, exploit human weaknesses, use persuasion and propaganda? Is not Christian conversion sometimes patterned along communistic brain washing methods?"

First, I would answer, we do not use methods we have learned from brain washers. It is the brain washers who have taken methods long known to Christians; but the Communists have distorted these useful, altruistic methods in vogue among Christians for nineteen centuries. They use the same to do violence to the personality. There is a diabolical element present in brain washing, it smells of the pit, it is the product of the father of lies, the old Lucifer, Satan, who has appropriated psychic mechanisms created by God for man's salvation, and who has twisted them about for his own nefarious designs to increase his kingdom of evil among men, which converts will in turn be anti-Christ. Words are used, but to harm and not to heal. Preaching is used, not to save but to destroy the soul. "Wind", "earthquakes" and "fire" are used. "But the Lord is not in the wind, the fire, the earthquake" of communism.



There is still "the still small voice" of the Spirit and it is found only in Christian conversion. "Jesus came preaching." (Mark 1:14) One of the aims of preaching is conversion. Christian conversion is not human compulsion, it is not human persuasion in the first instance, although human beings are used as witnesses. The "still small voice" (I Kings 19:11-13), the divine element, can never be left out of conversion. "Come now and let us reason together", saith the Lord who is the essence of love, of grace. "Us" (God and man) "reason" (not coerce) "together" (not onesided).

Dr. Granberg, in his comprehensive paper, raised the question: (Page 13) "Is conversion unique to Christianity?" The question that has concerned me much more is this: "Is Christian conversion unique?" Granted, as the author says on page 14, that regeneration is "the Holy Spirit's implanting within man the seed from which faith and repentance spring up", I still feel I cannot go with the author all the way that conversion "refers to the psychological processes involved", nor where he distinguishes regeneration as an act of "the stimulating agent (the Holy Spirit)" and "conversion" the psychological process resulting from this agent."

"Regeneration", defined as "The divine act by which the sinner is endowed with new spiritual life", the implanting of that principle of new life, that seed, that "Secret and inscrutable work of God" occurring in the unconscious or the subconscious of man, "exclusively a work of God," is not then followed sooner or later by what we call Christian conversion, without that same Holy Spirit still hovering over that implanted seed, still actively quickening that spirit of the regenerated man, bringing him on to repentance and faith, which are the two elements of conversion. Faith is not of ourselves, "it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) (Lamentations 5:21). Conversion is "a moral or recreative act of God" taking place "in the conscious life of man." Without God participating all along the way, man could not do one moral act nor can he ever assume the role of creator or recreator at any time. I refer the reader to Manual of Reformed Doctrine, pages 241 to 247 of Lewis Berkhof, B. D., from whose book the definitions quoted above are taken.

I do not say that Dr. Granberg leaves the possibility of God intervening out of consideration here, but he surely does not stress it. I would wish to stress that I see Christian conversion as unique, Christian conversion as far more than a psychological process, say rather a spirito-psychological process. We are gathered here in the Eighth Annual Convention of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies. We have previously developed in our conventions, step by step, consistently, a viewpoint which stresses, which emphasizes man as an organism, a unity of body, mind, and spirit. Man is some, psyche, and spirit. Against the secular world we maintain man is not merely psychosomatic, but is spirito-psycho-somatic, with that spiritual kernel in man pervading all, especially in the redeemed. But even in the unregenerate, the sin-darkened mind, God, by His common grace, has not left that mind to abandonment. This emphasis belongs here also in Christian conversion.

St. Paul could say to pagans at Iconium (Acts 14:17): "God hath not left Himself without witness." Paul could say to pagans at Athens: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "We have the law of God written in our hearts" says Paul. That spiritual core pervades all that we do. That "still small voice" will never stop speaking in our lives, and speaks most forcibly also in our psychological mechanisms in conversion.

In conclusion, in conversion, God uses the human psyche as His workshop. The Holy Spirit uses the cognitive realm of the mind or psyche as the depository and storehouse of truths and for thinking on these Godly matters and witnessing to the same. The Holy Spirit uses the affective, the emotional realm of the mind as a point of awareness of God's loving call, "always Thou lovedst me", and as the human realm making possible a returning love to God for "His unspeakable gift." The Holy Spirit uses the volitional aspect of the psyche, the realm of activity, of behavior, (the "will", if you will), to work for Him to act in His behalf, to live for Him. The uniqueness of Christian conversion is exactly herein, that it is already a sanctified psyche that is being acted upon, different in this from all other types of conversion in the world.

In essence, then, we see a human side of conversion with which we can deal and may deal from a psychological standpoint; but we reach a point in dealing with the topic of conversion, a threshold over which psychology cannot step, a Holy of Holies closed to materialistic "science", a realm of para-psychology, at which point theology must step in. And even after theology has had its full say, the words of St. Paul, spoken concerning the resurrection from the dead, will still apply also to conversion: "Behold I show you a mystery."



## THE BEARING OF CONVERSION ON THERAPEUTIC PROCEDURES

by

Rev. Paul Miller, Hospital Chaplain

The program committee's invitation for me to be a participant in this panel discussion has resulted thus far in providing a very challenging and stimulating experience. It is not only from the personal satisfaction derived in being permitted to make a meager contribution to this convention, but also from the need to place under closer examination some of my presuppositions and assumptions concerning the influence of conversion upon the individuals to whom I regularly minister. The task of preparing this presentation has demanded that a more critical and rigorous analysis be applied to the evaluation process of determining the difference between the real and the imagined spiritual results which every minister is most eager to claim. It is threatening to one's idealism to approach a critical study which may reveal some of the limitations of Christian conversion, especially in the area of the emotionally disturbed personality.

Confessedly, to one whose task it is to minister to persons in crisis situations and who holds that Christian conversion is an indispensable to both entering and enjoying the Kingdom of God, I could conceive of no higher joy than to honestly report that from every angle of approach and practice, this significant spiritual experience in the life of an individual renders him most willing and eager to avail himself at all times of the total ministry of the chaplain. The objective facts which this study must encounter move one away quite quickly from an easy optimism to a struggle with many hard, stubborn, resistive problems whose solutions are not reached by simple generalizations and ready answers. The idealistic claims often made for the positive results of conversion are unhappily exposed to tests in the areas of human experience which invariably demand some modification.

An added awareness presents itself quite forcibly that such a task as the one undertaken by one who is not competently oriented to the science of research and controlled investigative procedures, may unwittingly involve the investigator in many dangers and dilemmas in his effort to render a respectably accurate and valid conclusion. However, some method must be employed to obtain a body of data from which conclusions may be drawn. Every effort has been made to obtain maximum accuracy and validity.

A description of the setting in which this investigative procedure has taken place and the therapeutic procedures of the chaplain will serve as the next items of discussion. The Ypsilanti State Hospital is an institution of the State of Michigan with a bed capacity for over 4000 patients. A tabulation of its population with respect to religious classification would indicate approximately 60 persons of the Jewish faith, 1750 of the Roman Catholic faith, and 2350 of the non-Catholic and non-Jewish group. Of this group to which the Protestant ministry is directed, approximately twenty-five percent do not possess sufficient mental capacity to benefit directly from the chaplain's ministry. Of the remainder, only 33-1/3 per cent have enjoyed a pre-hospital contact with some religious group as indicated by a study of social worker's reports and case histories.

This hospital provides very adequate facilities for the religious life of its patients. An interdenominational religious center comprising of three separate chapels, Catholic, Jewish and Protestant in one unit enables a maximum number of patients to worship at any hour. Patients who have permission to move about the grounds are at liberty to use the chapels during the week whenever they may choose for meditation and rest. This gives the patient freedom to visit the chaplain's office for whatever spiritual need may occasion it. With over 33-1/3 per cent of the patient population enjoying ground privileges, it is possible to structure a religious program similar to that of a parish. Services are held regularly on Sundays and Wednesday afternoons. During the course of a week, over one quarter of the hospital population will have participated in one or more of the religious services of the three faiths.

The chaplain's chief function in relation to his patient constituency is that of fulfilling his vocation as a hospital pastor. The hospital administration has assigned to him the responsibility of providing appropriate, regular worship services, also the organization of religious group activities such as Sunday School classes, Bible Study groups and choirs. For patients confined to their wards, he must arrange for the type of religious programs designed to meet their needs. He brings to those on the danger list and to the chronically ill bed patients a ministry through personal contact. The responsibility of providing suitable religious literature, Bibles, and devotional aids is his also.

In lieu of this therapeutic activity the question before us is: What are the specific results Christian conversion yields in the life of the individual that will increase appreciation for and render more meaningful the ministerial functions of the chaplain? It seems appropriate at this juncture to present a precise definition of what is meant by the term "Conversion". For the purposes of this discussion, a definition given by A. H. Strong in his "Systematic Theology", seems to serve best. It is as follows: "Conversion shall be defined as that change in the governing disposition of the mind which results in the sinner's turning on the one hand from sin, and on the other hand to Christ." It is observed by many theologians that the nature of this change may be characterized by a sudden or by a gradual onset, or in some instances arise out of a crisis experience. It is said that conversion takes place in a given situation and set of experiences resulting in an impact upon the unity and totality of the personality. It is in this general sense that the term "conversion" is used in this paper.

If the effects of the conversion experience upon the ministerial function of the chaplain are to be ascertained, it is most necessary to identify such individuals in whom this experience has been realized. Some method of investigation and evaluation with direct focus upon the individual himself is necessary. The formulation of a set of criteria by which a person may be identified as either converted or non-converted with proper allowances for the complicated factors of emotional disturbance is a most precarious venture. Unhappily no such set ready-made is available. If one is to be constructed, it will in all likelihood evidence the characteristics, value-judgments, prejudices and emotional bias of the investigator. A sincere attempt has been made in the process of structuring a set of criteria to incorporate some of the norms used by the Christian community at large by which it attempts to identify the reality of the conversion experience. Inasmuch as this criteria was applied to individuals in a mental hospital setting, every application of it has taken into full account the emotional impairment of the individual in arriving at a conclusion. The following are the criteria used in this study to identify those patients has having experienced Christian conversion:

- (1) The quality and degree of the acceptance of the chaplain as a representative of God.



- (2) The degree of interest demonstrated in the worship services and religious programs by regular attendance.
- (3) The reputation of the person as a Christian in his ward situation, therapy groups, and in hospital community life.
- (4) The manner by which he accepts the reality factors of his illness and of himself.
- (5) His acceptance as a Christian by other patients who comprise an informal Christian fellowship group.
- (6) The testimony of the individual himself that he has experienced religious conversion. The application of this criteria was limited to those who had achieved a satisfactory degree of adjustment to hospital life. Most patients had ground privileges, and were granted frequent visits away from the hospital. All were able to assume a reasonable degree of responsibility and carry out some work assignment.

Nineteen patients were interviewed. The majority on a one-to-one basis, several in a group setting. Seven different religious denominations were represented in this number. The interviews were structured along these general lines:

- (1) A brief introductory explanation was given to clarify the purpose of the interview and what its objectives were. (The patient was given the opportunity to refuse if he so wished.)
- (2) A broad definition of conversion was set forth with the explanation that it was to be used in the frame of reference which his own particular faith group held.
- (3) The asking of a set of questions covering the following areas:
  - (a) What does he understand the term "conversion" to mean?
  - (b) Is he conscious that he experienced it?
  - (c) At what point in his life's experience was he aware that it occurred?
  - (d) What was the nature of the experience, sudden or gradual?
  - (e) Was he aware of any marked contrasts in his life prior to and after the conversion experience.
  - (f) Did any lapses or interruptions break the continuity of his Christian experience?
  - (g) Does he experience any recognized feelings of hostility toward God? If so, how long do they persist?
  - (h) Did his conversion experience occur prior to the onset of his emotional problem?
  - (i) How does he now feel about himself as a Christian?

A collation of the interview data obtained yielded the following statistics: Four professed to have experienced sudden conversion. Two in revival meeting circumstances and two during a crisis situation, involving sickness and the death of a close relative. (The religious denominations with which these patients had contact stressed the mode of sudden conversion.) Nine reported that they had experienced a gradual type of conversion which was fully realized at the time of confirmation, baptism, or uniting with the church. Five were not as specific but indicated their experiences as slow emergences of religious consciousness as the process of maturation occurred. One states that he felt that he had always been converted and was unable to recall any time in his life when this was not a reality. Concerning mode of life before and after conversion, only six indicated that any contrast had been experienced. The number out of this group of nineteen who witnessed to some lapse as having occurred in regular attendance at worship services, Bible reading and personal prayer was fifteen. The lengths of the lapses were reported to have extended from six months to four years. The remaining four out of nineteen felt that they had maintained a continual, unbroken relationship with the Church and God. The question to which the most difficulty in response was incurred was that one which concerned the relationship in time of the conversion experience to

the onset of the emotional disturbance. In evaluating the responses to this question, it was quite evident fifteen individuals professed conversion prior to their history of emotional difficulty. In four cases, it was quite apparent that the marks of mental illness were already apparent at the time they claimed to have been converted. In observing the mental status of this group over a period of several years of hospitalization it was not detected that their level of function and adjustment had been impaired noticeably by unusual periods of depression, extreme paranoid reactions, marked aggressiveness or other pathological manifestations which would prevent a serviceable adjustment to institutional community life.

The question which the foregoing purports to elucidate is: How does the phenomenon known as "conversion" in the life of a mental patient enhance the therapeutic procedure of the chaplain? The following observations are offered in answer.

The most extensive aspect of the chaplain's ministry is that of conducting community worship services in the chapel. In response to the chaplain's appeal for attendance, the converted patient endeavors to attend regularly. He also participates by his presence in Bible study classes and special inspirational programs. He evidences a stronger willingness to join himself with others and share with them a corporate religious experience. His merging of himself into the group strengthens his social consciousness and counteracts the tendency inherent in his mental problem to withdraw and isolate himself. His activity in the singing of hymns, responsive readings, and unison prayers, reinforces his sense of togetherness with his fellow-patients and worshipers. In this social atmosphere, he listens to the words from the Bible and the sermon. By receiving them he is encouraged to acquire new insights into his life's situation and experience a renewal of faith. Through these spiritual resources he is enabled to redirect some of his unwholesome attitudes and beliefs into more constructive and healthful areas.

Another significant aspect of the chaplain's ministry in a State hospital situation is that of providing the opportunity for the formation of warm and meaningful interpersonal relationships with patients who seek his interest in their spiritual welfare. This is expressed more effectively in the counseling relationship. It is observed that one who has experienced religious conversion is more ready to avail himself of personal interview opportunities with the chaplain. In the counseling relationship the chaplain can assure the patient of his acceptance and of God's acceptance of him. The patient discovers this type of relationship to be satisfying and therapeutic inasmuch as it provides an atmosphere wherein he is free to express his negative feelings without fear of being rejected or having judgment passed upon him. In such a setting he may unburden himself, share his problems, fears, yearnings and hopes with one who strives to understand him. This response on the part of the patient to the counseling ministry of the chaplain most significantly enhances his pastoral outreach.

For any type of ministry it is necessary to make available to those who can profit from it, appropriate religious literature. This includes Bibles, Testaments, Scripture portions, prayer books, devotional aids, and Sunday School literature. By the interest shown on the part of a converted individual for these aids, it may be reasonably assumed that much support and encouragement is derived from this mode of spiritual therapy.

It is of much concern to the hospital chaplain that a "fellowship of kindred minds" exists within the larger framework of his institutional parish. The majority of individuals who populate a State hospital are diagnosed as suffering from some form of schizophrenic reaction. Frequently those who are afflicted with this disorder are hindered by a flattened tone of affect from enjoying normal social relationships. It appears that the converted patient struggles more strenuously to overcome his



apathy and attempts to relate in a cordial manner to his fellow-patient. Often, he will invite others to the religious services. Arising out of the spiritual motivation within him, he is more amenable to social motivation.

A common liability which threatens the constancy of the experience of a Christian mental patient is the cycle of apathy and depression. Conversion does not forestall this phase and its effects, and does not perceptibly shorten the duration of the phase. There is evidence to believe that as the patient begins to move out of this phase, his recovery to a functional level is helped by his use of spiritual means.

In retrospect it is not difficult for the chaplain to observe how that unconsciously he has given more attention and service to a patient who has experienced conversion. It is possibly due to the patient's acceptance of him and his ministry which leads to a greater emotional investment in the patient's total welfare. It may be modestly assumed that this too, could aid the patient more speedily toward his recovery goal.

In conclusion, it must be frankly acknowledged that the foregoing attempt to evaluate the bearing of conversion upon the therapeutic procedures of the chaplain is open to rigorous criticism and questions of accuracy and validity. It is very likely that because the observer was most eager to see certain evidence, his subjectivity led him beyond precise actuality. However, after the deductions for unscientific procedure have been made, it is felt that there will be considerable remaining which amply attest to the assets of conversion to a mental hospital chaplain's ministry.

## THE BEARING OF CONVERSION ON THERAPEUTIC PROCEDURES

by

Dr. J. D. Plekker, Psychiatrist

For the purpose of this paper the topic can be restated in question form. What are the obstacles that arise in the treatment of a Christian patient in contrast with the treatment of an unbelieving patient by a Christian therapist? What is the nature of these hindrances, and how do they influence the treatment situation? A corollary question is, does the Christian faith of the therapist have any bearing on the treatment of either the Christian or a non-Christian patient? Since the topic puts major emphasis on the therapeutic procedure, let us look first at the part the therapist plays under these circumstances.

In my opinion, the therapist, considered from the viewpoint of his religious commitments, may inject perplexities into the therapeutic relationship unless he is aware of certain precautions. Although he may be a mature Christian and wise in professional ability, his therapeutic approach is not in good balance unless he continues to strive for a closer correlation of his scientific knowledge with the Word of God. The revealed truth of the scriptures is inexhaustible and newer insights into the psychologic functioning of man are ever being discovered.

He must avoid two pitfalls. As a Christian he is inclined to function more as a theologian or a moralist to the relative neglect of the specific psychologic problems of the patient. However, this inclination is an asset in therapy when questions arise concerning man's will to sin and his responsibility to the claims of redemptive grace. Only the Scriptures can then serve as the point of departure for therapy.

The other pitfall consists in allowing the patient to fix the boundaries of treatment. After all, the patient requests the services of the therapist and at any time may exercise the option of terminating therapy. If the therapist acquiesces, treatment is likely to be truncated to a relative recovery of previous psychic equilibrium or improvement of cultural adjustment. Such a result of treatment can as well as accomplished by an unbelieving therapist, and furthermore may actually prove harmful to the patient in case the cultural values are in conflict with Christian ethics. Since treatment involves the whole person and procedure cannot be divorced from basic philosophy, the patient is entitled to be informed by the therapist of his own Christian convictions, and thereby eliminate misunderstanding and unnecessary impediments in the treatment process.

The therapist must also be aware of the ultimate goal in therapy. It is commonplace to say he must not merely focus on the problem but also on the fellow human being who has the problem. Can the Christian therapist be content in limiting his perspective to temporal psychologic improvement and disregard the patient's meaning and purpose in life and his eternal destiny? Can the ultimate goal in therapy be anything less than the full restoration of the patient to the fellowship of God? It seems to me that pursuit of this objective must be the



compelling motive of the therapist. The striving to attain this goal seeks the total welfare of the patient and is therefore a manifestation of the Christian love the therapist should bear to the patient. It gives consistency to the treatment process and thereby establishes and maintains rapport. And finally, it sets the pattern of the daily encounter with the patient so that no time is lost in irrelevant digressions. Without the guidance of this objective the therapist is likely to be led into detours and to encounter road blocks that vitiate his therapeutic efforts. This goal is enduring and is not nullified if it is not attained nor is it compromised if it does not come to fullest expression in therapy. It is my conclusion, therefore, that the Christian faith of the therapist has a definite bearing on therapeutic procedures, and that it provides the only solid foundation for therapy regardless of the belief or unbelief of the patient.

How then is the therapeutic setting affected by the religious views of the patient? The Christian patient shares a communion of revealed truth, spiritual resources, and eternal perspective that is intrinsically unlike the contribution of the unbelieving patient. Although this distinction is basic it is not always as obvious as might be anticipated. As a product of Western culture the non-Christian patient often has acquired many Christian graces. On the other hand the Christian patient may sink into a quagmire of religious misconceptions, conflictive feelings, and neurotic defenses that practically render his faith powerless. From the standpoint of treatment the latter patient presents greater difficulties because he requires a re-education of his distorted religious ideas.

Such an exigency is illustrated by a single man, brought up in a Christian home, whose childhood exuberance and normal strivings were attributed to the influence of an indwelling devil. This evil spirit had to be exorcised by repeated prayer of confession. He retreated into a phantasy world that was both protective and threatening. In his mid-thirties his defenses broke down when he was faced with a neurotic fear of death in anticipation of major surgery. He was convinced his mental illness was incompatible with religious faith and therefore God had forsaken him. He ascribed his neurotic guilt to his sins and resisted psychotherapy as an intolerable whitewash. This caricature of compulsive religiosity obscured his basic faith. Needless to say his whole personality was disorganized by turmoil of fear and self-hate which since his childhood constantly threatened to overwhelm him to the point of despair.

Patients who have had a healthy Christian training can draw on their inherent spiritual powers, and when confronted with a psychologic problem can often find a higher level of spiritual and psychologic functioning by means of therapy. The patient was a married woman. At the age of ten years she had suddenly lost her mother by death. During adolescence phobic reactions and compulsions set in which increased in intensity in married life. Much of her anxiety yielded to psychotherapy but she was not able to utilize fully the healing power of her religious faith until one day her young daughter remarked, "I am not afraid because Jesus loves me." The innocent trust of her child instantly infused her with a resurgence of faith she had not experienced before. Heretofore the full reality of her belief had been dimmed by the separation anxiety that occurred during the formative years of religious training and understanding. As her anxiety decreased during therapy her faith came to fuller expression, while in turn the strengthening of faith helped her to overcome the anxiety.

The crisis of adult religious conversion often is characterized by a relative resolution of emotional conflicts and amending of motivations. This remarkable transformation is difficult to explain from the psychologic viewpoint alone. It encompasses the total personality and manifests itself in a reorganization of self-identity and an energizing of purpose. It is a metamorphosis that Christians recognize as genuine evidence of spiritual renewal or regeneration but an unbeliever might interpret as neurotic or psychotic behavior requiring prolonged psychotherapy.

The patient was a young man whose father abandoned the family when the patient was nine years old. The mother had been involved with several lovers prior to the father's leaving. The boy sustained the crushing wounds of maternal neglect and paternal abandonment. He lived here and there until at age fifteen he struck out for himself, leading a profligate life. In his mid-twenties he was converted, and this event took place about one year before his first therapy session. His dilemma consisted in the persistence of obsessions about sex. He was disturbed about the incongruity of his repetitive thoughts and his new spiritual life. This turbulence, weighed down with guilt feelings, threatened his selfcontrol.

At the onset of therapy it was important to ascertain the degree of impact this religious experience had made on him. He bore no illwill toward his relatives in spite of their ostracism. From an average wage he managed to save enough money to hire a tutor. He witnessed regularly at religious services in jails and hospitals. His sole ambition was to be an evangelist. The history of his conversion and subsequent life was credible, and his observed behavior was sincere. But a neurotic love hunger had intercepted the development of sufficient self-acceptance and now emerged as obsessions pertaining to fantasied sex intimacies. Therapy was accelerated considerably by his strong religious motivations. The therapeutic setting in this instance was an outstanding example of the distinctive quality of religious sharing that occurs when both participants are Christians.

Treatment of an unbelieving patient offers a unique challenge. When the non-Christian patient is confronted with the demands of Christian ethics he often responds with indifference or resistance. These obstacles can often be overcome if ethical questions are not injected as gratuitous irrelevancies but as inherent elements of a harmonious and consistent therapeutic process. A professed irreligious young married woman had suffered two psychotic episodes several years apart. After the latter illness the recovery proceeded to a synthesis of self-organization that allowed good adjustment in every sphere of activity. However, she was not content with this state of emotional well-being but asked for more consultations without being able to give definite reasons for her request.

It was recalled that during therapy she had asked penetrating questions about the tenets of Christianity. Her inquiries had been tentative and fleeting, and had not been expanded during therapy of the psychologic illness. Her attitude was ambivalent, and on one occasion when she was given a book by C. S. Lewis, which she read faithfully, she returned the compliment with a collection of mystical poems written by a contemporary Oriental philosopher. It was evident that at first she was mainly concerned about insurance against the recurrence of her mental illness, but later it became an earnest searching for a comprehensive reorientation to a more meaningful life. Consultations with this patient are still in progress but in spite of diversities of reli-



gious views this instance of therapy has been a mutually enriching experience.

These are a few examples of the almost countless difficulties and many satisfactions that can arise in the treatment of Christian and non-Christian patients. The illness of the first patient, which was characterized by the complications of distorted religiosity with its attendant crippling effect on personality, raises a point of real concern. Although it represents an extreme case yet there are many similar disorders of less degree that require prolonged and intensive therapy. This directs our attention to the area of prevention. In the study of these cases it becomes evident that in some Christian homes dictatorial and over-solicitous attitudes prevail that presumably are justified on Scriptural warrant, but which actually spring from arbitrary notions and religious ignorance and misconceptions. The home is pervaded by an atmosphere of hypocrisy. Sound Christian precepts are replaced by a form of personal religiosity. Emotional conflicts of all sorts arise that paralyze the growth of healthy spiritual life.

The attitude of over-protectiveness and over-solicitude is undoubtedly more common but no less insidious than the attitude of authoritarianism. Both, however, produce reactions of a mixture of helpless compliance and defiant aggression. The child complies or rebels against the smothering effect of this attitude and when this pose is linked with a false piety he reacts with a profound sense of guilt as well. The attitude is expressed somewhat as follows, "You don't love God if you don't do what I tell you to do," or "God doesn't love you if you do what you think you should do." Such specious insinuations bind the conscience of the child and burden him with a neurotic conflict that becomes increasingly intolerable as he grows into adulthood. No doubt many patients with symptoms of anxiety, depression, hostility, and guilt are the victims of misguided attitudes characterized by religious overtones. In other patients it results in defects of character that are expressed in misconduct and antisocial behavior.

In view of the urgency of a program of prevention I should like to enlist the active participation of our association. I believe our association is in a strategic position to assume the leadership in the publication of its accumulated studies as they relate to the spiritual-mental development of the child. This practical project of disseminating information would not only be of great benefit to many homes and schools but would also give further impetus to our association in its purpose of studying psychologic problems as they relate to Christian faith.

## THE BEARING OF CONVERSION ON THERAPEUTIC PROCEDURES

by

Rev. Henry Kik, Pastor-Counselor

It is the teaching of the Word of God that the genius of Christianity is the development of personality. Christianity showed an amazing power to transform the lives of men. Today this unique ability to develop strength of personality and character is no longer as obvious. Many people in the community of believers have related themselves objectively to the means of grace; but subjectively, within themselves, they struggle with conflicts, tensions, anxieties and sins that God never intended to be such an integral part of redeemed personality. Such people need to be converted even though they have named the name of God in Christ! E. Stanley Jones observes,<sup>1</sup>

"....the area of the work of conversion is largely in the realm of wrong thinking, wrong attitudes, wrong emotion--of a mixed-up, messed-up self. This inner hell is far worse than the outer hell, for it is more immediate, more present, more intimate. A generation that has rejected an outer hell finds it has moved within. 'And the last state of that man is worse than the first.' Hell is portable."

### The Meaning of Conversion

If conversion is to have proper bearing on therapeutic procedures, the therapist must know (1) the meaning of conversion and (2) the technique of counseling on the basis of its meaning. One must be aware that regeneration and conversion are not the same. Regeneration is exclusively an act of divine Sovereignty in which a new life principle is planted in the dead heart. This planted seed of regeneration is intangible, invisible, purely spiritual. In this sense regeneration is the starting point; it is the new birth. The work of regeneration in the Word of God is described apart from the consciousness. And this implies that the work of regeneration is not a moral work, and therefore, cannot be accomplished by means of advice or exhortation--either in sermon or song. We would not leave the impression that we have no concern about regeneration. We would, however, emphatically state that in counseling procedures with Christians we can only assume (and at times not assume) that regeneration has taken place simply upon the basis of the client's profession of faith. Our assumptions, if therapy is to be effective, are not to be communicated to the client.

The elect person, regenerated, born again, effectually called, converts himself. In conversion the fact of cooperation on the part of the saved person assumes a clearly defined and perceptible character. Kuyper in his work The Holy Spirit directs our attention to the fact that,

"It is a remarkable fact that the Sacred Scriptures refers to conversion almost one hundred and forty times as being an act of man, and only six times as an act of the Holy Spirit. It is repeated again and again: 'Repent and turn to the Lord your God.' ....This fact should be carefully considered....and,



therefore, preachers who, when preaching on conversion, treat it almost invariably in its passive aspect and in the abstract; who apparently lack the courage and boldness to declare to their hearers that it is their duty to convert themselves unto God.... and as long as regeneration and conversion are confounded..... they pray for the conversion of the hearers, but dare not in the name of the Lord demand it of them."<sup>2</sup>

If Kuyper's observation is true it may be that the pulpit's lack of properly dealing with conversion in preaching and pastoral counseling may inadvertently be adding clients to the waiting lists of skilled therapists. Sin, a power in reversed action, causes disorder and irregularities which inflame the nature of man toward evil and causes the destruction of personality. Saving conversion should - and does - change all this. If conversion is "a conscious act of the will by which a man turns to God, or turns from one opinion or course of conduct to another" it is evident that it is a deliberate, active movement of the mind in a new direction. To be sure, conversion in its saving sense occurs only once, but in the psychological frame of reference it occurs continuously. Its operation must pass through man's ego and of divine necessity applied to every relation of life.

Ernest White in his book Christian Life and the Unconscious looking at conversion from the psychological angle<sup>3</sup> observes that "the most obvious change that takes place in conversion is a change of emotional tone from a state of conflict and unrest to a condition of peace and happiness. The convert finds peace and joy in believing." We would at this juncture point out that Scripture, speaking of conversion, does not always imply that it is a saving conversion. It may be temporary (emotional); intellectual (the power of positive thinking); or ordinary (compliance with definition of ones immediate spiritual culture). One may ask for a definition of genuine conversion. Kuyper suggests that it is: first, "the man bidden converts himself, (providentially motivated), and then, second, he gives glory to the Holy Spirit alone."

### Types of Conversion

If man "converts himself" we ask the question, "When?" The answer is difficult. It depends on motivation, personality structure, conditioning factors, and the spiritual expectations of the spiritual culture in which the "convert" makes the expression of his conversion. Although the answer of "when?" is difficult it is important in the therapeutic procedure for the therapist to know the "when" for it can contribute to the "why".

The therapist must also know the type of conversion with which the client is identified. Was it developmental - a type such as Timothy's who was "born into the church" and reared in the faith since childhood? Out of a covenantal relationship, Paul was convinced that preceded parental faith was Timothy's experienced faith. Most professing Christians to be found in most churches today are people of the "developmental-type" of conversion. They come into a living and compelling relationship with God by profession of their faith in Jesus Christ without the need of great change in personality and conduct.

Was the conversion a "crisis-type"? Was it cataclysmal, sudden, and emotional? This type of conversion can be found in small measure in most churches but is a special product of many fundamental assemblies and most evangelistic campaigns where this type of conversion may be both fostered and expected.

### Observations

To develop therapeutic procedures among the members of the community of believers, I have studied one hundred long term cases that have come to our agency in a period of eight months. These case histories have been taken in chronological order without consideration of origin or content. Because of this method of selection we do not expect to meet the standards of reliability or validity, although there may be a measure of agreement on the norms of judgments. Before making our observations from these cases we assume the following:

1. In the type of metropolitan community in which our agency carries on its work, we should expect that a great majority of our clients would come out of churches that "produce" developmental type of conversions. Perhaps eighty per cent of the communions are so structured.
2. Not only are ninety-five per cent of our clients members of evangelical churches, but also have been, for the most part reared in the atmosphere of a Christian home.
3. The majority of our clients have come under pastoral care. This does not imply that all of them had this care in the area of their immediate need.

Keeping in mind that the clients in the one hundred case studies before us have nominally been "converted" they yet do not have what I like to call "redeemed personalities". To accomplish this "redemption", conversion as a "change of emotional tone" must become part of the therapeutic procedure. This is evident from the following observations:

1. Almost every client has experienced traumatic emotional experiences in childhood. These have been frustrating and difficult for the child to face or integrate either because of his unfavorable environment or constitutional background. His personality and character formation is molded in childhood by the family, "the psychic agent of society".

2. The presenting problem of the client usually makes no mention of conversion, the relationship of the problem to the will of God, or feeling of spiritual guilt. He is deeply concerned with that which contributes to anxiety, tension, frustration, or sin. Mention, however, of conversion or being "born again" is often the introductory statement of one who is identified with a crisis-type of conversion.

3. Although about eighty per cent of the community of believers is constituted by those sharing the developmental type of conversion, a majority of our clients in need of therapy have experienced a crisis-type of conversion. In this particular study forty-six cases from the developmental and fifty-four from the crisis-type.

4. In the presenting problem we discovered deviant sexual behaviour in various forms to the extent of 26% in the developmental type; 73% in the crisis type. In the latter category it is often more pronounced and identified with weak-willed, vacillating, and tempermental individuals.

5. Fourteen of the clients had specialized training to qualify them for Kingdom work. Nine of these had crisis-type conversion; four developmental.



Six of the fourteen are now in secular work.

Reflecting upon these observations we may ask ourselves if these clients have been converted. In the limited sense of conversion the answer may be in the affirmative. In the therapeutic process as applied by the Word and the Spirit in which the person's actual self, including the conscious and the pre-conscious, are consciously oriented into the divinely intended self-structure, the answer is no!

It is at this point that a proper understanding of the Biblical concept of conversion can become part of the therapeutic procedure in counseling. John T. McNeill in his History of the Cure of Souls believes that this concept of therapy has been "ignored by many earnest and highly trained men who undertake the reconstruction of personalities damaged in the stresses of life."<sup>4</sup> Not only has it been ignored, but possibly surrendered to therapists outside the realm of true religion. McNeill also observes that,

"A generation that turns from religion is more and more productive of psychopathic personalities and victims of psychoneurosis and psychosis, and is exposed to the dominance of fanatical psychoneurotics who use psychology itself to destroy personality. The leaders of society and of the churches need to measure critically and justly the possibilities and limitations of scientific psychotherapy in meeting the terrific forces that ravage the interior life of modern man. It is not less important to weigh with the same critical judgment the methods traditionally employed by religious guides of souls."<sup>5</sup>

If we are agreed that the techniques of therapy, though diversified, have basic similarities, we can properly apply the defined concept of conversion in therapeutic procedure. The similarities include the following: (1) they are all goal-directed toward specific objectives, (2) they are organized around a relationship between therapist and patient, (3) they require some kind of interviewing procedure, and (4) invoke emotional responses in the client which must be therapeutically handled.<sup>6</sup> Conversion, then, in treatment can be oriented with supportive, re-educative and reconstructive therapy. In my personal application it is used in a threefold manner. (1) Present conversion witness - change of intention and character. (2) Pre-conversion exploration - to assist in the proper reworking of the personality. (3) Post-conversion prediction - on the basis of psychological make-up.

It is my conviction upon study and observation of the case histories studied that the conversion concept, spiritually accepted and psychologically interpreted, can be preventive as well as therapeutic. This implies professional skill and insight within all the disciplines associated with therapeutic procedure. It insists that the tendency to over-simplification of conversion by fundamentalistic evangelism must be challenged and corrected. Remember that conversion is "a change of emotional tone from a state of conflict and unrest to a condition of peace and happiness." When the Holy Spirit plants the seed of regeneration in the heart of man, saving conversion must be a result. The result includes, not only realized salvation of the soul, but also God-ordained self-structure which I like to name "redeemed personality".

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# THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW NATURES

## IN THE CONVERTED MAN

by

Anthony A. Hoekema

You will note that I have taken the liberty of rephrasing the topic assigned to me. Instead of speaking about the "Co-existence of Old and New Natures," I prefer to speak about "The Struggle Between Old and New Natures in the Converted Man." This way of wording the topic helps me to emphasize what I believe to be the real problem involved here: namely, the struggle within the believer.

As I have been wrestling with this problem, the conviction has grown upon me that the converted man is a bundle of contradictions. He hates and yet he loves God's law. He wills and yet he does not will the good. He despises and yet he commits the evil. He is at one and the same time a Pharisee and a publican, a Simon and a Peter, a sinner and yet a saint.

In attempting to speak on this topic, I am reminded of the negro preacher who placed on the bulletin board of his church the following notice: "Come next Sunday morning. I will explain the inexplicable and unscrew the inscrutable." Despite the imposing title of my talk, I'm afraid I shall only succeed in getting the inscrutable screwed up a little more tightly.

I think we all recognize that this matter of the struggle between old and new natures in the converted is a very real problem. We shall have to try to find our way between the perfectionist and the defeatist extremes. While attempting, as we are, to understand the psychology of conversion, it is important that we keep this struggle in proper focus. To help us do this, I should like to call your attention, first, to the misunderstanding of this struggle in medieval scholasticism.

### SCHOLASTICISM

The medieval scholastic theologians, under the influence of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, watered down the conflict within the regenerate to a struggle between his reason and his passions. We see this very clearly in Thomas Aquinas, the outstanding representative of high scholasticism. For Aquinas the intellect is the highest power in the soul because it is the highest power in God. Man's intellect is, therefore, the most god-like power in him.<sup>1</sup>

What, now, did this superiority of the intellect or reason mean for the moral struggle in the believer? In the state of innocence there was an absolute sovereignty of the intellect over the so-called lower powers of the soul (that is, the passions and appetites): "For this rectitude (that is, the rectitude of man's primitive state) consisted in his reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul."<sup>2</sup> Because of the fall of man, however, these "lower powers" are no longer subject to the in-

telleet, but often go contrary to its rule. Hence there is now a great "rebellion of carnal appetite against reason."<sup>3</sup> By means of the restoration of the donum superadditum (or added gift of grace) in regeneration, the intellect or reason can again rule over the lower powers. Virtue, therefore, now consists in the dominance of reason over passion, whereas vice results when the passions are dominant over the reason: "The passions of the soul, insofar as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin; but insofar as they are controlled by reason, they pertain to virtue."<sup>4</sup> Hence the essential moral conflict in the regenerate or converted man, for Aquinas, is the conflict of reason versus the passions. If one follows reason, one does good; if one follows the passions, one does evil. In Gal. 5:17 we read, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Illustrative of the way in which Aquinas's presuppositions determine his exposition of Scripture is his interpretation of this passage: "The flesh lusts against the spirit by the rebellion of the passions against the reason..."<sup>5</sup> On the basis of what we have noted so far, it would seem that, for Aquinas, reason, like the customer, is always right; all we need to do, in any doubtful moral situation, is simply to follow the dictates of the reason.

To be fair to Aquinas, however, we should observe that in another section of the Summa Theologica than that from which the above quotations were taken, he admits that there may be sin in the reason. He explains that this may happen in two ways: when reason errs in the knowledge of the truth, or when the reason either commands the inordinate movements of the lower powers or after deliberation fails to restrain them.<sup>6</sup> At this point Aquinas transcends his earlier position, that virtue is the control of the passions by the reason. Here he comes closer to a Scriptural view of man, having been compelled to admit that reason may be deficient, and may either command wrong deeds or fail to check them. The view expressed here, in I-II 74, is, however, not typical of Aquinas's general position.

Generally Aquinas insists that the moral struggle in the believer is that of reason versus the passions. This conception, however, is derived not from the Scriptures but from Greek philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle asserted that the intellect was a spark of divinity in man, and that man's intellect was supposed to rule over his passions, the latter being the source of evil. This view is dramatically portrayed by Plato's myth of the charioteer: The soul is like a chariot driven by two steeds. The good horse stands for the "spirited" part of man (thumos), while the bad horse--crooked, heavy, shaggy-eared and deaf, hardly obedient to whip and spurs--stands for the appetites (epithumia). The charioteer stands for the reason. With great difficulty and tremendous exertion the charioteer manages to keep the bad horse from pulling the chariot into the ditch. After a long struggle the bad horse is finally tamed and brought into line.<sup>7</sup> It will be observed that there is no real sense of sin here, since an aspect of autonomous man (his reason) is the source of virtue, and since reason finally succeeds in taming the passions which are the source of evil. It is this unscriptural and Greek view of man's moral struggle which dominates the ethics of the Middle Ages.

This medieval conception grossly oversimplifies a complex psychological problem--as if the main ethical struggle is simply that of determining whether a given impulse comes from the appetitive aspect of one's nature or from the rational side of his being. Virtue is simplistically defined as following rational, and suppressing appetitive, impulses. The ascetic strain in Roman Catholic moralism to which this conception led can still be observed in such



typical Roman Catholic notions as the higher morality of unmarried monks and nuns, the necessity for a celibate clergy, and the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary. We may also see a relationship between this conception of the moral struggle and the view that good works are meritorious. For the definition of virtue typical of scholasticism involves a quantitative standard of virtue, which necessarily carries with it the temptation to ascribe merit to those in whom the number of times they have suppressed the passions exceeds the number of times in which they have yielded to them.

### CALVIN

We can now appreciate more fully the reinterpretation of this moral struggle in the converted man which we find in the Reformers. As far as Calvin is concerned, there are some unfortunate traces of Greek and scholastic anthropology left in him. Like the Scholastics he said that the intellect is "the guide and governor of the soul,"<sup>8</sup> and that the directing part of man is the reason.<sup>9</sup> Calvin's view of man's original state is, in one respect at least, quite similar to that of Aquinas: "This term, therefore (the image of God), denotes the integrity which Adam possessed, when he was endued with a right understanding, when he had affections regulated by reason...."<sup>10</sup> Calvin's psychology here, as others have pointed out, is not very satisfactory; it is as much a faculty psychology as was the scholastic view of man, having been taken over largely from the Greek philosophers.

When Calvin discusses the effect of the fall on man, however, he gives scholastic anthropology a wide berth. Though reason still rules in man's fallen state, it has now become so corrupted by sin that its government is misrule. The trouble with the Greek philosophers, Calvin adds, is that, failing to recognize man's corruption, they describe man as though he had never fallen into sin.<sup>11</sup> "...Man has not only been ensnared by the inferior appetites, but abominable impiety has seized the very citadel of his mind..."<sup>12</sup> Calvin vigorously opposes those who say that man has been corrupted only in his sensual part and not in his reason:<sup>13</sup> "They say that there is great disagreement between organic motions and the soul's rational part. As if reason itself did not also disagree with itself and were not at cross purposes with itself, just like armies at war."<sup>14</sup> Against those who teach that by flesh the Bible means only the sensual aspect of the soul, Calvin insists that "whatever we have from nature is flesh."<sup>15</sup> In his comment on Gal. 5:17 Calvin takes sharp issue with Aquinas's interpretation: "The spirit denotes the renewed nature, or the grace of regeneration; and what else does the flesh mean, but 'the old man'?" Calvin adds significantly, "Disobedience and rebellion against the Spirit of God pervade the whole nature of man." And in his exposition of Rom. 7:15 Calvin indicates that the struggle here depicted is not simply a struggle between reason and passions but a much deeper kind of conflict, which only begins when a man has been regenerated, and which cuts across all fragmentations of human nature: "Thus, while pulled in two ways, they (believers) fight against their own nature, and nature fights against them." This, in other words, is a conflict between man's whole nature as loving God, and man's whole nature as under the power of the evil one. We see, therefore, in Calvin the emergence of a new understanding of the moral struggle of the converted man.

## LUTHER

We find, however, an even more penetrating analysis of this struggle in Luther. Because of Luther's psychological temperament he could enter more deeply into both the despair of the sinner and the joy of the redeemed than Calvin was able to do; he was more a man of emotional ups and downs than Calvin was.<sup>16</sup> Luther was not interested in mere theoretical psychology. In the words of one of his interpreters, Luther wished to go beyond a mere "psychologische Ich-Begriff" (psychological ego-concept) to a "theologische Ich-Begriff" (theological ego-concept) which sees man not just in relation to his psychological functions but in relation to his God.<sup>17</sup> At this point Luther reminds us of Berkouwer's emphasis that man can never be fully understood unless he is seen in his relation to God.

According to another Luther scholar, the most basic concept in Luther's ethics was the antithesis between flesh and spirit.<sup>18</sup> For Luther, however, this was not to be conceived of as a struggle between two different "parts" of man, but between two opposite dispositions of the whole man. Luther interpreted the Biblical concept flesh as referring, not just to the sensual or appetitive aspect of man's nature, but to the whole man.<sup>19</sup> Man's fleshliness reveals itself in every area of his life--not just in his passions. In his comment on Gal. 5:19 Luther observes that many of the works of the flesh there mentioned are other than sins of the body. He adds, "It is very necessary for us to know these things; for this word (flesh) is so darkened in the whole kingdom of the Pope, that they have taken the work of the flesh to be nothing else than the accomplishing of fleshly lust, or the act of lechery; wherefore it was not possible for them to understand Paul."<sup>20</sup> In his characteristic way Luther reveals his contempt for the scholastic view of this struggle:

The schoolmen, the monks, and such other; never felt any spiritual temptations, and therefore they fought only for the repressing and overcoming of fleshly lust and lechery; and being proud of that victory which they never yet obtained, they thought themselves far better and more holy than married men. I will not say, that, under this holy pretence, they nourished and maintained all kinds of horrible sins, as dissension, pride, hatred, disdain, and despising of their neighbors... infidelity, blasphemy, and such-like. Against these sins they never fought, nay, rather, they took them to be no sins at all....<sup>21</sup>

What, now, does Luther say about the meaning of spirit? For the scholastics, as we saw, spirit in Gal. 5:17 denoted the reason; for Luther, however, spirit meant the whole man transformed by God and turned toward God. Over against the scholastic quantitative standard of virtue, Luther insisted that it is not good works which make the person good, but that it is the person who makes the works good. He uses an interesting illustration:

Just so no one becomes a bishop by doing the works of a bishop, but after he has been made a bishop, he does the works of a bishop. So the works of faith do not make faith, but faith does the works of faith.<sup>22</sup>

Virtue, for Luther, is not a mere matter of following reason rather than the passions, but is dependent on the question of whether the person who does this deed is still thoroughly self-centered, or in self-forgetfulness gives himself



to others.<sup>23</sup> The all-important thing about a deed, Luther would say, is its motivation--a motivation determined by the whole man.

Flesh and spirit, therefore, both mean the whole man. "The whole man is spiritual or the whole man is fleshly, depending on whether devotion to God or devotion to one's own ego has the supremacy."<sup>24</sup> Fleshliness reveals itself not just in sensuality but in every activity of which man is capable--even in his moral striving, if this striving is done only for the sake of one's own honor. Luther, in fact, distinguished between two kinds of fleshly people: sinistrales (those on the left hand) and dextrales (those on the right hand). The former show their fleshliness in yielding to their passions and lusts; the latter reveal their fleshliness by subduing their lusts and practicing virtue. The second type, Luther affirms, is the worse of the two.<sup>25</sup> In other words, someone leading an outwardly respectable life may nevertheless be thoroughly fleshly in his inner motivation. Luther probably had Roman Catholic monks in mind, but we think also of Jesus' denunciations of the Pharisees, who were so diabolically evil precisely because they thought themselves righteous.

When grace transforms man, it created a new nature called spirit. This does not involve the annihilation of the old nature, since the two natures remain side by side throughout life. For the believer, therefore, life is a constant struggle; in fact, so says Luther on Gal. 5:17, "The more godly a man is, the more doth he feel that battle."<sup>26</sup>

For Luther, therefore, the real struggle within the believer is a struggle between two whole men: the new man and the old man. One author quotes a statement of Luther's to this effect: "There are two whole men and one whole man."<sup>27</sup> The antithesis within man is thus not between two "parts" of his soul, but between two "whole men," one of whom hates God, while the other loves God. Yet this antithesis does not disrupt man's unity. Two reasons can be given for this:

1) There is psychological continuity between the old man and the new. Commenting on the last verse of Romans 7, Luther said,

See: as one and the same man at the same time serves the law of God and the law of sin, he is at the same time righteous and a sinner. For he does not say, My mind serves the law of God, neither, My flesh serves the law of sin, but I, he says, the whole man, the same person, serve both.<sup>28</sup>

Erdmann Schott sums up Luther's position on this point by saying: "On the one hand I am flesh, and on the other hand I am spirit; there are the greatest possible antitheses, and yet it is the same ego."<sup>29</sup>

2) The second reason why this antithesis does not disrupt man's unity is that, in the believer, the new man dominates over the old:

The faithful, therefore, receive great consolation by this doctrine of Paul, in that they know themselves to have part of the flesh, and part of the spirit, but yet so notwithstanding that the spirit ruleth, and the flesh is subdued and kept under awe, that righteousness reigneth, and sin serveth.<sup>30</sup>

For Luther, therefore, the old and the new natures are not on the same footing in the believer; the new nature has already in principle won the victory over

the old. Though the old nature is still present, the new is in the driver's seat.

Luther has given us some tremendous insights into the nature of the problem which concerns us this afternoon. We are therefore greatly indebted to him, as well as to Calvin, for clarifying the issue which is before us.

#### THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTION OF THIS STRUGGLE

I should like next to invite your attention to a brief analysis of the Biblical description of this struggle. The Bible indicates the nature of this moral struggle within the believer in a variety of ways. A typical Old Testament way of describing the ethical antithesis is to oppose the heart of flesh to the heart of stone. We have already noted the contrast depicted in Gal. 5 between flesh and spirit. Other ways in which the New Testament pictures the opposing forces within the believer is by expressions such as these: new man versus old man; new nature versus old nature; the spiritual man versus the natural man; the inward man versus the law of sin in the members.

There are two Scripture passages in which this struggle is most sharply delineated. The first is Gal. 5:16-24, particularly verse 17: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other...." Some, like Luther, interpret spirit here as referring to man's new nature; other interpreters capitalize the word and understand it to mean the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Whichever interpretation we adopt, however, this passage clearly depicts the unremitting struggle in the heart of the believer between impulses which come from his old nature and those which come ultimately from the Holy Spirit.

The most vivid description of this struggle, however, is found in Romans 7:14-25. The concluding sentence of this passage is at the same time a summary of its basic thrust: "So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." This passage, as is well known, has been a great battleground for interpreters. From the beginning of the Christian era there have been those who held that this passage does not describe the regenerate man but applies only to the unregenerate. Augustine first shared this view, but later retracted it; his mature judgment was that this passage unmistakably denoted the regenerate man.<sup>32</sup> Without trying to list authorities on both sides of this question, let me just say that theologians of Reformed persuasion have generally followed Augustine's later interpretation: Calvin, Luther, Hodge, Shedd, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck. Recently Herman Ridderbos, Professor of New Testament theology at Kampen Seminary in the Netherlands, has created something of a stir in Reformed circles by championing the view that Romans 7 refers to the unregenerate man.<sup>33</sup> He was, however, soundly taken to task for this position by Professor Berkouwer, in the columns of a Dutch periodical of which both men are joint editors.<sup>34</sup>

I am convinced that Romans 7:14-25 must be understood as describing the regenerate or, if you will, the converted man. My reasons for taking this position are as follows: 1) The present tense in which the section is written. In verse 14 the tense shifts from the aorist to the present; I conclude that Paul is here speaking of himself in his present, regenerate state. 2) The purpose of this section is to prove that the law is good. Hence the regenerate individual here utters his conviction that, despite the continuing power of indwelling sin,



the law is holy. The testimony of an unregenerate man to the goodness of the law would not be sufficient to prove Paul's point. 3) The very language of this section points unmistakably to the regenerate man. For what unregenerate man can say, "What I hate, I do"? Can an unconverted person, whose heart has not been renewed by God's Spirit, really hate sin? Conclusive is verse 22: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Could an unregenerate person say this? A person who, according to Rom. 8:7, "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can...be"? 4) The extremely serious view of sin expressed by the speaker in verses 14-25 can only be entertained by the enlightened consciousness of the regenerate. Only a regenerate man will confess that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

If this is the correct interpretation of the passage, what, further, does Romans 7 tell us about the nature of this struggle in the believer? I should like to make four brief observations:

1) The struggle against sin continues throughout the earthly life of the converted person. In other words, there is no armistice in this war until death.

2) This struggle, however, does not involve a splitting of the converted person into two egos. If we examine this passage carefully, we shall see that the word ego, the Greek word for I, is used here in a twofold sense: in a more comprehensive and in a more limited sense. In verse 15, for example, where Paul says, "What I hate, that I do," he affirms that his ego does the thing he hates. In verse 17, however, he says, "So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." Here Paul tells us that it is no longer his ego, his I, which does the sin. Obviously the I which is said to do the wrong in verse 15 is a more comprehensive ego than the I which is said in verse 17 not to do the wrong. When Paul says, in verse 17, "it is no more I that do it," he is not attempting to evade his responsibility for wrongdoing, but he is using ego here as synonymous with new nature: it is not my new ego, my regenerate ego, that commits this sin. I do not sin, Paul here tells us, with my inmost self, for that inmost self has been renewed. That inmost self is, however, the constitutive principle of my more comprehensive self--the self which includes the old nature. We may not say, therefore, that the old nature which still remains in the believer constitutes a second ego--it is not, strictly speaking, an ego. In the regenerated man the ego, the inmost self, has been renewed.

3) In the converted man, therefore, sin, though present, no longer rules. "It is no more I that do it": the new ego is now in the saddle; that which causes the regenerate to sin is an old nature which, though still active, is no longer in complete control. The very fact that the speaker here can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," substantiates this point.

4) The two natures, as here described are related to each other as one dominant nature to another nature which is no longer dominant. We may compare the believer to a country in which the king must continually contend with rebel forces which, however have already been decisively defeated in battle. During the entire reign of this king, the rebel forces continue to engage in guerrilla warfare, harassing the king no end, but never able to dethrone him. It is in this fashion that I interpret the contrasts found in verses 22 and 25, between the "inward man" and the "law in the members" which wars against the law of the mind, or between the mind which serves the law of God and the flesh which serves the law of sin.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

What, finally, are some of the psychological implications of this struggle for our understanding of the nature of conversion? I should like to make three comments in this connection. First, in our attempt to describe Christian conversion, let us not ignore this struggle. It strikes me that many studies of conversion leave the impression that, after conversion has taken place, a completely new and wholly different pattern of behavior emerges. This is, however, not true to the Scriptures. The struggle with sin persists throughout the life of the convert. Perfectionists, who claim that for a special class of believers the struggle disappears, fail to understand the depths of man's sinfulness, tend to have superficial views of the demands of God's law, and tend to foster a "holier-than-thou" attitude on the part of the "sanctified." Let us be on our guard against perfectionism also in our psychological analysis of conversion.

Secondly, the Christian psychotherapist, psychologist, minister, or educator ought to recognize the uniqueness of this struggle within the Christian. The struggle we have been discussing is not the same as the moral struggle of the non-Christian. Herman Bavinck, the well-known Dutch theologian of a previous generation, has some significant things to say about this in his Reasonable Faith:

...In the unregenerate also there is often a struggle present. But this is not a spiritual struggle. It is a rational struggle, a conflict between the human reason and conscience, on the one hand, and his will and desire on the other....The battle is not waged against all sins, but only against some of them, and for the most part only against certain external and outwardly offensive sins. The struggle is not waged against sin as sin....

The spiritual struggle which believers must conduct within their souls has a very different character. It is not a struggle between reason and passion, but between the flesh and the spirit, between the old and the new man, between the sin which continues to dwell in believers and the spiritual principle of life which has been planted in their hearts....<sup>35</sup>

These two forces stand, armed and militant, over against each other, battling for the whole of the human person. In one and the same reason of one and the same person there is a battle going on between faith and unbelief, between truth and falsehood; in one and the same heart there is an opposition between pure drives and desires and impure ones; in one and the same will an evil lust opposes a good one..... The struggle is in very fact a struggle between two beings in one and the same being.<sup>36</sup>

We must, therefore, not give people the impression that, when one is converted, all conflicts automatically cease. In one way, conversion means the resolution of the most basic conflict of life, since a new center of loyalty has been established. In another sense, however, one could say that when one has been converted the real conflict has just begun. Calvin affirms, on Romans 7:15, "...This conflict, of which the apostle speaks, does not exist in man before he is renewed by the Spirit of God...." It is only after conversion that the real battle against sin as sin is joined; this battle continues to the end of life.

The Christian psychotherapist, therefore, may not simply adopt as his goal the removal or resolution of all possible conflicts from the life of his counsellee. We



may make a similar statement about integration. In one sense conversion means the integration of all of life around a dominant loyalty to Christ. In another sense, however, integration must be avoided like the plague--that is, the attempt to integrate the old nature with the new. It is this type of compromise, I suppose, of which our Lord spoke when he said to the Laodiceans: "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

Thirdly, the recognition of this struggle infinitely complicates the problem of arriving at a satisfactory psychological definition of Christian conversion. There is no simple formula by means of which we can define this struggle. We are not permitted to say that there are now two egos in the converted man since, as we have seen, there is psychological continuity between the old nature and the new. Neither are we permitted to reduce this conflict to a battle between the conscious and the unconscious phases of man's existence, or between the Id and the Super-Ego. While acknowledging the tremendous contributions Freud has made to clinical psychology, we must recognize that he had no appreciation for what was distinctively Christian about this struggle within man's soul. We may at least learn this much from Freud: the struggle within the believer can never be identified with a battle between conscious and unconscious, but is one which cuts across the dividing line between conscious and unconscious. Whereas it is popularly thought that Freud's Unconscious, with its lustful desires, is somewhat comparable to the old man of Christian theology, it is, in fact, often the impulses of the old nature which are in the forefront of our consciousness, while the motivations of the new nature are for the moment buried in the subconscious.

In other words, we deal here with something deeply mysterious, something which transcends the area of psychological definition. I am almost tempted to say that if you think you have succeeded in precisely defining this struggle psychologically, it is not the struggle of the Christian believer which you have defined, but a struggle which is not distinctively Christian. Paraphrasing a statement in Dr. Granberg's paper, I would say that the uniqueness of the Christian moral struggle is not found at the psychological level.

This fact greatly complicates the ethical problem as well. Bavinck writes penetratingly:

In every deliberation and deed of the believer...the good and the evil lie, as it were, mingled through each other. The measure and the degree to which both are present in any particular thought or deed differ greatly, of course, but nevertheless there is something of the old and something of the new man in all our actions and thoughts.<sup>37</sup>

This is, I suppose, the reason why the church has always said that we can never infallibly distinguish between true believers and hypocrites.

The battle between new and old natures rages until we die. Yet the very fact that the battle is raging is a ground for hope. I conclude with a discerning paragraph from Erdmann Schott:

It is the glory of the grace of God that it makes us enemies of our own selves. God's word splits the Christian, so that the believer becomes a double man. The one man is, however, always conquered by the other---yet not conquered in any other way than that in which the whole world is conquered for the Christian. Not in feeling---at least not fully---but in faith and in hope. In faith---meaning that we feel it either not at all or only imperfectly. In hope---meaning that a day is coming in which we shall feel it perfectly.<sup>38</sup>



# FOOTNOTES

- 1 Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 93.
- 2 Ibid., I, 95.
- 3 Ibid., II-II, 164, Article 1.
- 4 Ibid., I-II, 24, 2, ad 3.
- 5 Ibid., I, 95, 2, ad 1.
- 6 Ibid., I-II, 74, 5.
- 7 Phaedrus 246A.
- 8 Institutes I, 15, 7.
- 9 Ibid., I, 15, 8. One sees clearly Calvin's dependence on the Greek philosophers for much of his psychology when one observes that in the new McNeill edition of the Institutes 8 of the footnotes to I, 15, 6-8 refer to Plato, Aristotle, or both.
- 10 Inst. I, 15, 3.
- 11 Ibid., I, 15, 8.
- 12 Ibid., II, 1, 9.
- 13 Ibid., II, 2, 4.
- 14 Ibid., I, 15, 6 (McNeill edition).
- 15 Ibid., II, 3, 3.
- 16 See the illuminating recent psychological comparison of Luther and Calvin in Eberhard Grossman's Beitrage zur Psychologischen Analyse der Reformatoren Luther und Calvin (Basel: Karger, 1958).
- 17 Erdmann Schott, Fleisch und Geist nach Luthers Lehre (Leipzig: Scholl, 1928), pp. 52-59.
- 18 Carl Stange, "Luther und das Sittliche Ideal," Studien zur Theologie Luthers (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1928), p. 170.
- 19 Ibid., p. 183.
- 20 Comm. on Galatians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), p. 490.
- 21 Ibid., PP. 472-73 (on Gal. 5:17).
- 22 Ewald M. Plass, What Luther says (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), II, 721, under item 2252.

- 23 Stange, op. cit., p. 170.
- 24 Ibid., p. 173.
- 25 Schott, op. cit., p. 6.
- 26 Com. on Galatians, p. 475.
- 27 "Sunt duo toti homines et unus totus homo," Weimarer Lutherausgabe, II, 586, quoted by M. A. H. Stomps, Die Anthropologie Martin Luthers (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1935), 148.
- 28 Luthers Romerbriefvorlesung, Ficker, II, 176, 5-9; quoted in Schott, op. cit., p. 54, footnote 1.
- 29 Schott, op. cit., p. 3.
- 30 Comm. on Galatians, p. 475 (on Gal. 5:17).
- 31 H. Ridderbos in New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), and S. Greijdanus in Korte Verklaring (Kampen: Kok 1922). Calvin is somewhat ambiguous here, speaking both about man's renewed nature and about the Holy Spirit in the same paragraph (on Gal. 5:17). Appeal to the Greek text will not help us here, since in the oldest mss. of the Greek New Testament all the letters are capitals.
- 32 Against Two Letters of the Pegaians, I, 22 (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, V, 384).
- 33 Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament: Aan de Romeinen (Kampen: Kok, 1959), PP. 162-171.
- 34 "Een Nieuwe Commentaar op Romeinen," Gereformeerd Weekblad, Vol. 14, Nos. 41-44 (April 10 - May 8, 1959), pp. 321, 328, 337, 345.
- 35 Our Reasonable Faith, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), PP. 492-93.
- 36 Ibid., p. 494.
- 37 Ibid., p. 495.
- 38 Schott, op. cit., pp. 71-72.



## PERSONALITY FACTORS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONVERSIONS

by

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After listening with deep interest to Dr. Granberg's excellent paper, what I have to say will seem exceedingly elementary in comparison. I trust, therefore, that you are not expecting anything so profound from me. I am here, not as an expert, but as a learner, still seeking knowledge so that I may be enabled to do better work in the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps I should begin this brief paper by saying that conversion has to do with the reorganization of a life which has not given proper place to the normal functioning of the religious consciousness in its development. In many instances the religious impulses have been submerged in interests which are either hostile to religion or are at least indifferent to it. Then, of course, in other cases the religious consciousness has established itself, but in such a way as to be out of balance with the rest of the mental development. So, conversion, considered as a reintegration of life, may take on several forms.

The first has to do with individuals who have never had any proper unification of life whatsoever, even though they may have reached the years of maturity. As a rule, they are aimless, and need something to challenge them. Harold Begbie in his Twice Born Men, an excellent book dealing in clinical fashion with several authentic cases of persons converted through the efforts of the Salvation Army, tells about one character, among others, known as "Old Born Drunk." He says: "This man, the child of frightfully drunken parents, had been born in drink, and was most certainly, as his name declares, actually born drunk....The vileness of his clothing and the unhealthy appearance of his flesh did not strike the Salvation Army visitor till afterwards. Her whole attention was held in a kind of horror by the aspect of the man's eyes. They were terrible with soullessness...They were the eyes of a man neither living nor dead; they were the eyes of nothing that had ever lived or could ever die -- the eyes of eternal stillborn stupor."

And yet, this man, so sunken in the depths of sin and degradation experienced conversion. He was truly "brought out of darkness into light." The process of regeneration and renewal began in his soul through the power of God, the Holy Spirit; and as a result his life from then on had meaning and significance for him. Begbie's book is filled with story after story such as this. It is worth careful reading.

Professor Coe directs our attention to a fundamental truth when he states that "in conversion the subject's very self seems to be profoundly changed," and that "the sphere of the change is the attitude that constitutes one's character or mode of life." In conversion life acquires new meaning and significance. Dr. William James pointed out several years ago that "a self hitherto divided and feeling wrong and unhappy becomes consciously right and happy, with a firmer hold on religious realities" through conversion.

Conversion functions in religious experience as an agency to bring unity into a mind more or less at war with itself. In proportion as conversion succeeds in

bringing unity into life, it becomes an agency for energizing life, both through a reduction of mental friction and a release of new energy. Conversion functions, also, as an incentive to optimism, causing one's feeling of unworthiness and sense of sinfulness to give way to a feeling of salvation and exaltation. A further function of conversion is to lead the subject to a social revaluation of the self, although the struggle against the less social integration of life may be a long and hard one. Finally, conversion strikes at the yielding of the instinctive life to its lower animal gratifications and helps to sublimate the organic impulses by joining them to a higher type of satisfaction.

Sometimes an individual will undergo such an experience through conversion as to result in a complete renovation and sublimation of the subconscious life. In such a case the individual has experienced what literally amounts to a second birth. Into such lives there sometimes comes a sweeping revolution, so that things once highly valued are now felt to be worthless, and some things formerly detested are now valued highly. Along with this, life in general takes a far more serious and purposeful course than it did before. Old ways of living that cheapened life are abandoned, and new ways that give superior values to life are adopted. This is an essentially religious reconstruction of the sense of values, and the process that brings it about we call conversion.

Prior to conversion a man may have accepted as the desirable consummation of life the immediate gratification of his sensual inclinations with little or no regard to the will and purpose of God in his life. After conversion he is convinced that these natural functions of life must, in order to find true and lasting happiness, be controlled by a higher law than immediate satisfaction for its own sake. In fact, when a man is truly converted he will realize that his instincts must contribute to the larger purpose which God has for an individual's life. He is convinced that what he had been willing to accept before this change came into his life as satisfactory, must be "cast out" as unworthy of further interest, because now his new mode of life is different.

Sometimes there are conversions from irreligion to religion. In this type the preconversion experience does not lack in a dominating motive with its organization of life forces about it, but we find that the controlling purpose is not religious. I do not feel that it is the function of conversion to awaken some initial central purpose, but to recreate the dominating purpose already in the field, or rather to supplant it with a more worthy purpose and to reweave all the life interests about the more worthy purpose.

No doubt it was a conversion of this type that Saint Augustine experienced. He was a man of mature life when he became converted. Augustine was a professor of philosophy, with a very highly trained mind, but the dominating purpose of his life was self-gratification, as he tells us in his Confessions. Not only was his motive centered in self-gratification, but sensual desire was organized about the same center. As a young man he seems to have been well satisfied with this state of affairs, but as he approached the period of maturity he became increasingly dissatisfied. Apparently one cause of this dissatisfaction was the reviving of suggestions which had been implanted in his mind by his Christian mother when he was but a child. Perhaps another was the reading of Christian literature. Then came an experience of inner warfare, as two ideals, the religious and the irreligious and the irreligious, struggled for the control of his impulses and loyalties. Finally the selfish and sensual purpose gave way to the unselfish and religious; and Augustine experienced a sweeping change, which we call conversion. When he



felt that he was accepted by God, his whole life began to form around this new center of faith in God and allegiance to Him, and his life became organized through the process of conversion. He dedicated his great talents to the service of God and the Church.

In Saint Augustine's conversion we see clearly that when religion becomes a vital experience it controls all the important interests of life. It refines and regulates the various psychological systems which compose the hierarchy of personality. The instincts, fundamental wishes, and abilities are governed by the master interest. Furthermore, it enables the person to throw all his energies into the good life.

Again, however instantaneous a conversion may be, we know that usually evidences show an early influence, as I have already pointed out in the case of St. Augustine. A case in point would be the conversion of St. Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, as we knew him before his conversion. Saul was a young Jew, brought up in a very strict Pharisee family. They sincerely believed that one's entire life should be given over to the doing of the will of God in accordance with the requirements of the Jewish Law. We know that Saul was committed to this idea up to the very moment of his conversion to the Christian faith. He appeared as a fanatical persecutor of the Christians, and it was while he was in the process of carrying warrants for the arrest of certain Jews who had embraced the Christian faith that Saul himself became converted at the gate of Damascus.

It might possibly seem that Saul's conversion near Damascus that day was wholly unprepared for in his previous life as a Pharisee, but as I understand them the facts do not support such an inference. At the moment Saul was raging against the Christians, it appears that two important lines of suggestion were at work in his fertile mind: one, I think, was that his Jewish faith was not adequate to bring him that religious assurance which he longed for; and the other, that the Christian faith did offer Saul such assurance. Indeed, his ministry after this tremendous experience indicates a deep longing for full satisfaction in his Godward outreach.

Now, let us note that the conversion experience of Saul of Tarsus is valuable for our present study because it reveals certain characteristics which can be understood in religious conversions generally: 1. It was instantaneous in that it came to focus with a suddenness and power that were prostrating; and yet it was well prepared for in the previous experiences of the convert. At least, that is how I see it. 2. A clearly marked line of suggestion can be traced which would have enabled an expert in spiritual psychosis to predict with some degree of certainty what the outcome would be. 3. As the convert's letters to his churches reveal, his conversion marked a release from a mental constraint which became increasingly unbearable before his surrender to Christ. 4. Throughout the whole experience there is evidence that Saul recognized the pull of a divine authority upon his life, and his conversion was marked by his yielding to that authority without reserve. 5. We find that in Saul's conversion and older center of religious loyalty was supplanted by a newer one.

From the time of Saul onwards there have been innumerable records of men and women who have, through the power of the Holy Spirit, experienced sudden change in their lives -- a change which has brought about a complete alternation in their outlook on life and in their manner of daily living.

Let us note further, as we think together, that conversion may take place

before baptism, leading a person to seek the new birth in that Sacrament; or it may take place after baptism, when one who has been again in baptism, but has never striven to live the good life, may turn from evil and begin to do better. In the case of a baptized person, conversion may be regarded as a willing acknowledgment of the baptismal vows, and a conscious acceptance of his position as a child of God by adoption and grace. This revival of spirit may be sudden, or it may be gradual.

I think it might be well for us to remind ourselves that the vast majority of Christian people find it almost impossible to say when they first consciously yielded their hearts to God. In fact, the life of such has been a succession of gentle changes and renewals, each bringing the soul nearer to Christ.

This is not to say, however, that conversion, in the sense of a turning-about, is never needed. Whenever the trend of a man's life is in the wrong direction, and his central purposes are set toward unworthy and unwholesome ends, a definite reversal is the correct policy of his life. This will be necessary if he is to be "made whole." Furthermore, the conversion experience has sometimes been a significant factor in the integration of personality. It should be understood, however, that God may be just as much in the experience of decision as in that of conversion.

In fact, Dr. Stolz, in his book, *The Psychology of Religious Living*, seems to feel that the term conversion "is not appropriately and accurately applied to the gradual growth method of Christian development." He goes on to say that "since the individual has never known himself to be anything but a Christian, and his personality at no time has suffered disorganization through the abandonment of Christian life as a whole, and he can recall no datable transition from a condition of disloyalty to Christ to one of loyalty to him, the concept of growth rather than that of conversion designates this form of religious awakening and progress."

Those of us who have been dealing with people's spiritual and moral problems through the years realize that in many instances there have been imperceptible integrations of insight over a considerable period of time, rather than the experience of alienation from and reconciliation to God in instantaneous conversion.

However, whether in conversion or in this gradual growth, the self must become unified. This is the secret. There must be what Dr. Pratt calls "the inner unity of a perfect moral selfhood." In conversion a man is revealed to himself. Frequently it is not a very happy self, but it is likely to be the real self before God, the Holy Spirit, changes the life. The experience brings a revelation of tremendous importance.

As the noted theologian Niebuhr states: "Man has always been his most vexing problem." His self-consciousness complicates his behavior and he becomes divided against himself. So he checks and contradicts himself by the inner separation of self-consciousness. The clashing desires of a complex inner life gives him no rest, until he has found a way. In the struggle of emotions, then comes a decisive experience and a readiness of conversion, which helps solve the problem, and brings unity to the mental, spiritual and moral life. The process is not merely a moral change, a reform in conduct or in temper, but a change in a man's personal relation to God. In conversion, therefore, he passes from a condition of estrangement or indifference to one of friendship and trust that will involve, of course,



in many lives a complete moral revolution, but the moral revolution is the result of conversion. The conversion itself is the acceptance of God's love and the surrender to it of the whole of life. A restoration of friendship between a man and God is conversion. Rather than having his back turned toward God, he now faces Him.

In my experience, the stability of the position which has been reached in an emotional crisis must be due to something else than emotion. Why do so many thousands lapse?

Why do so many stand firm and strong through the years? what do those who stand fast possess, which those who lapse, and fall by the wayside, lack?

Perhaps it is partly due to the fact that their mental life has not been fully unified in the change. People who want to be wholly consecrated to our Lord seem, at times, to hold back part of the offering. Why? Well, perhaps they are clinging to some practice, friendship, belief, or employment, and these things are permitted to remain in their old places and they gradually assert again their old influence. The converted person had not realized that to be safe it is necessary to love God not only with the heart, but also with the mind.

The far-reaching question arises, what is the power that converts, that arrests a man in a state of indifference or sin, and brings him to abandon it and give himself to God?

We know that in conversion there arises a new personal relationship on the part of a man towards God. Whatever the fountainhead of the change may be, conversion is the part a man takes in it on his own behalf. A man's newly found personal relationship towards God will then arise from a new understanding of God. Perhaps we can go so far as to say that his alienation from Him, in the first place, has at the foundation of it a misunderstanding. No doubt when we have given ourselves to sin we resist God because He is against our ways; on the other hand, perhaps we took to these ways because we did not see that God is love, and that His way was fullness of life. There was sin in our blindness no doubt, but it was blindness.

But may we ask: What is it in Christ that masters the human spirit in this way? Christ offers Himself to us in all His fullness, and it is in fellowship with Him as He in actuality is what saves and redeems us.

God the Holy Spirit operates to unify us at the center of our being, and when we turn away from the ways of sin to God in conversion, we experience a transformation of the self.

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## PERSONALITY FACTORS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONVERSION

by

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The purpose of this paper is two-fold: (1) to define conversion in terms of the Reformed point of view and (2) to discuss the personality factors operative in such conversion.

Though other religious communions usually seek to base their viewpoints on the Christian scriptures, the Reformed theologian makes it clear that his studies, while respecting the findings of other students, are biblically orientated. A cursory examination of definitions of conversion will reveal the existence of a wide variety of such definitions. A few definitions taken at random are as follows:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. (W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 186)

Now as I understand it, the essential thing about conversion is just the unification of character, the achievement of a new self, which I have been describing. The process may have many by-products of an emotional nature, it may express itself in varying intellectual terms, it may be gradual or seemingly sudden, but the really important and the only essential part of it is just this new birth by which a man ceases to be a mere psychological thing or a divided self and becomes a unified being with a definite direction under the guidance of a group of consistent and harmonious purposes or ideals. (J. B. Pratt, The Religious Consciousness, p. 123)

....Christian conversion is a new birth in Christ. Psychologically we may refer to it as a reintegration of life around a new center by which our conflicts are resolved. But as Christians we can describe it only as the finding of a new life, new standards of value, and new goals for living as a result of union with Christ. (Charles Laymon, New Life in Christ, 14)

The evangelical crisis is that moment in the experience of regeneration when the individual, knowingly, commits himself through faith to Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. (Robert Fern, The Psychology of Christian Conversion, p. 52)

To be born again - to undergo a spiritual rebirth which leaves us changed - is known in the language of religion as "conversion." ... Actually, all the word itself means is "change"; and the converted person is one who has changed his way of life. (William S. Hill, "The Psychology of Conversion," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. 6, No. 58, p. 42).

Conversion can be defined as Life impinging on life, awakening it, unifying it, setting it aglow, moralizing it, making it "care," putting a new zest into everything, and making it love. (E. S. Jones, Conversion, p. 49)

True conversion is born of godly sorrow, and issues in a life of devotion to God, II Cor. 7:10... (a) Active conversion is that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated sinner, in His conscious life, to turn to Him in repentance and faith. (b) Passive conversion is the resulting conscious act of the regenerated sinner whereby he, through the grace of God, turns to God in repentance and faith. (L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 483)

In view of the wide divergence of understanding regarding the meaning of conversion, this paper will seek to define the word from the biblical viewpoint alone.

### I. The Biblical Concept of Conversion

Basically there is only one word in the Christian scriptures which demands our attention here. Let it first be said, it is not the word "metanoia" (or its verb form, "metanoeo"), translated usually as "repentance." Berkhof is in error when he says: "This is the most common word for conversion in the New Testament, and is also the most fundamental of the terms employed." (op.cit., p. 480) Never is "metanoia" translated "conversion," though it does have some resemblance to the conversion concept, as found in the New Testament. Thayer (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament) indicates the word means: "to change one's mind, i.e., to repent (to feel sorry that one has done this or that)." the one word which is translated "conversion" is "epistrephe" (verbal form, "epistrepheo"). Thayer gives as its meaning: "to turn to;" "to cause to return, to bring back."

This word "epistrepheo" is used in two senses in the New Testament:

(1) The word is used to refer to an experience of those who are not as yet in the Christian community. From the Reformed point of view, regeneration is a creative work of God and is therefore a work in which man is purely passive and in which there is no place for human co-operation. Salvation is thus wholly of God, in which man, made alive in Christ, shares the resurrection life and is called a new creation. Conversion, on the other hand, is the human response to the regeneration effected by the Holy Spirit. In the following references the word is used to describe the experience of individuals who embrace the Christian faith in general and the Lord Jesus Christ in particular:

Acts 26:18. The Apostle Paul, himself a convert to the Christian faith, speaks in this verse of the divine commission which God gave him, that he is to go to the people "to open their eyes, that they may turn (epistrepheo) from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins." In verse 20 Paul recounts his commission, declaring to all types of people "that they should repent (metanoeo) and turn to (epistrepheo) God..." In both these passages "conversion" means a turning to God and embracing the Christian gospel. It thus refers to an experience of those who are not yet in the Christian community.



I Peter 2:25. "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned (epistrepho) to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

Acts 9:35. "And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon... turned (epistrepho) to the Lord."

Acts 14:15. "...you should turn (epistrepho) from these vain things to a living God."

Acts 15:19. "...those of the Gentiles who turn (epistrepho) to God."

I Thess. 1:9. "You turned (epistrepho) to God from idols."

Isaiah 6:10 is referred to in Matt. 13:15, Mark 4:12, John 12:40 and Acts 28:27, where the use of the word "epistrepho" is similar to the other uses in this category.

Acts 3:19. "Repent (metanoeo) therefore, and turn again (epistrepho), that your sins may be blotted out..." Here Peter is addressing people who are not members of the church, who are unconverted, pleading with them to experience repentance and conversion.

Other verbal forms of "epistrepho" in this same category are found also in Acts 11:21 and II Corinthians 3:16.

The word appears in its noun form ("epistrephe") only once in the New Testament in Acts 15:13, where Paul and Barnabas reported "the conversion of the Gentiles."

Taking these references together we conclude that the word "conversion" is used first of all to describe the experience an individual has when he confesses, puts his trust in, embraces the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to remember that all the above references speak of conversion for those who as yet are outside the family of God and the Christian community.

(2) This word is also used to refer to an experience of those who are already in the church, who have (by implication) previously been "converted" (category (1) above), and who have already committed their lives to God in Christ.

Luke 1:16,17. Zechariah was told that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son and his name would be called John. Among other things, John "will turn (epistrepho) many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn (epistrepho) the hearts of the fathers to the children..." The sons of Israel, already by implication sons of God, shall be converted again to God in deeper and more meaningful commitment; and the hearts of the fathers shall be converted to the children.

Luke 17:4. In this passage Jesus is speaking to his disciples: "...if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents (metanoeo), forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns (epistrepho) to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." The meaning of "conversion" here is that a person already a disciple of Christ can experience a renewed sense of commitment even daily, if need be.

Luke 22:32. Here our Lord tells his follower Simon Peter, "...I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again (epistrepho, 'when thou art converted,' K. J. V.), strengthen your brethren." This use of the word "converted" leaves little doubt as to its exact meaning. When a study is made of Peter's life especially as it relates to his sincere confession ("Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."), his subsequent three-fold denial, his sorrowful and bitter repentance, his experience of the resurrection of Jesus, his commitment and rededication ("Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."), and his witness on the Day of Pentecost, then the meaning of the phrase "when thou art converted" becomes clearer. For Peter the Christian, already a child of God, his conversion following his denial of Christ was a renewed and complete dedication of himself to the Savior. The one regeneration may therefore be followed with several conversions.

James 5:19,20. Here is another reference to the subject of conversion experienced by those already in the Christian community. "My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back (epistrepho, 'and one convert him,' K.J.V.), let him know that whoever brings back (epistrepho, 'he which converteth the sinner,' K.J.V.) a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Conversion here means the experience of any one of the "brethren" (those in the Church) who strays from the truth of the Christian Faith and is then brought back, returns, and rededicates himself to God. Further, the person who brings back ("converteth") the sinning brother from the error of his way will save a soul from death. Thus it is clear that conversion is an experience which a Christian may have again and again. As such, it always points to a renewed commitment of his being to God. (Other uses of epistrepho are confined to the physical act of turning the body from one direction to another, to return, to turn back, and to come back. Since they have no vital relationship to the purpose of this study, they are not given here.)

The term "conversion" (epistrephe) is therefore used in the New Testament primarily in a two-fold manner:

- (1) To describe the experience of an individual who, though not a Christian, comes to embrace the Christian faith.
- (2) To describe the experience of a Christian who falls away from a meaningful fellowship with God in Christ and then comes back to a state of renewed dedication and commitment to his Lord. The first type we may describe as conversion to become a Christian; the second type we may describe as conversion as a Christian.

## II. Personality Factors Operative in Conversion

We shall consider at this juncture the process of conversion. Psychologically conversion may be defined as that type of spiritual growth or development which involves an appreciable change of direction concerning both religious ideas and behavior. Basically it is an emotional episode of illuminating suddenness, which may be deep or superficial, though it may also come about by a more gradual process. (Walter Houston Clark, The Psychology of Religion, p. 191). Whether such religious conversion is a definite crisis or a gradual awakening, the process is usually the same. A study of documentary records of conversions suggests that the convert passes through at least three fairly well-defined stages, whether he is coming for the first time to embrace the Christian faith or whether, as a Christian,



he is coming to experience a renewed sense of commitment to Jesus Christ as his Lord.

The first is a period of unrest, the causes of which may or may not have definition in the consciousness of the person. This has often been called theologically a "conviction of sin." This unrest usually proceeds from a sense of unworthiness or incompleteness closely resembling a sense of sin or associated with it in most cases. Occasionally there is merely a vague depression, perhaps springing from pathological sources. This unrest often arises from a certain measure of insight into one's soul and a sense of the great gap that inevitably exists between a religious person and the God he worships. The practice of some form of confession just prior to a conversion crisis is a reaction to this sense of unworthiness and the resulting exteriorizing of it through confession goes far toward explaining the ultimate sense of joy and relief that follows.

The second stage is the conversion crisis itself. With or without what would appear to be an adequate stimulus, there is a sense of sudden and great illumination, a feeling that one's problems have been solved. The experiences of life, which a moment before seemed so harsh and difficult, now seem comparatively easy. As is well-known, Augustine read a verse of scripture (Romans 13:13, 14) and immediately his doubts vanished and the temptations with which he had been struggling for many long years no longer troubled him. Wesley, it will be remembered, reported on the occasion of his conversion that he felt his heart "strangely warmed." While the first stage of the conversion process tends to be characterized by conflict and active mental struggle, the second stage is often ushered in by relaxation and surrender.

The third stage of conversion grows logically out of the second. As the emotion of the climax dies away, it leaves the convert with a sense of peace, release and inner harmony. He feels at one with the cosmos, his sins forgiven, his problems solved, and his miseries gone. W. H. Clark (p. 195) speaks of this experience as helping to explain "the sweetness of the post-climax stage, for the newly converted feels strong enough to attack any spiritual mountain."

Clark also indicates that while these three stages comprise the essence of the psychological process, another stage is necessary if the experience of conversion is to have any permanence. This is the concrete expression of conversion. The new convert is to be given an opportunity to express his feelings now that this new experience is his. Such was the case of Isaiah who ends the account of his conversion with the words: "Here am I; send me" (Is. 6:8).

It should also be pointed out in this connection that conversion experience may be influenced by abnormal factors and may even be wholly abnormal in their significance. Since conversion is so often, or perhaps always, associated with conflict, it would be strange if neuroses or even more serious disturbances were not often involved. Some cases, as Clark (p. 202) indicates, are normal, some borderline, and some wholly pathological. But, as William James points out, this has little to do with the spiritual significance of the experience as judged by its fruits. He shows that both John Bunyan and George Fox were unstable personalities, yet their religious influence was creative and wholesome. Anton Boisen has found religious significance in some cases of catatonic schizophrenia.

Since personality factors obviously have a vital relationship to conversion,

we will at this time consider these factors in some detail especially as they relate to different types of conversion. We shall consider the definition of personality as given by Gordon W. Allport (Personality: A Psychological Interpretation, 1937) to be the most satisfactory we have yet seen. In his words "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment" (p.48). The "psychophysical systems" indicates that the habits, specific and general attitudes, sentiments, and dispositions of the individual are referred to. Dispositions in particular has reference to traits or groups of traits in a latent or active condition. The term "psychophysical" reminds us that personality is neither exclusively mental or exclusively neural. The organization entails the operation of both body and mind, inextricably fused into a personal unity. Allport indicates that the word "determine" in his definition is a natural consequence of the biophysical view. The systems that constitute personality are in every sense determining tendencies, and when aroused by suitable stimuli provoke those adjustive and expressive acts by which the personality comes to be known.

Allport lists the common traits of personality in three general headings: the underlying psychobiological factors, the expressive traits and the attitudinal traits. In so doing he constructs a "psychograph," a printed graph or profile upon which is plotted the actual magnitude of common traits attained by any individual. His psychograph assumes that the common variables there included are normally distributed in an average American population. A more detailed list of the common traits of personality are now given:

I. Psycho-biological factors, raw material from which traits develop:

1. Physique:

- a. Symmetry, as opposed to deformity, refers to bodily form, including build, facial features, complexion and normal use of the limbs. Around this variable, more than any other, develop feelings of inferiority and their consequences.
- b. Health, as opposed to ill-health.
- c. Vitality, which is both obscure and important. It is called "energy output," "vivacity" and "pep."

2. Intelligence:

- a. Abstract or "verbal" intelligence. The capacity to solve novel problems with the use of symbols seems to be a power possessed by each individual in a certain amount.
- b. Mechanical or "practical" intelligence. This is sometimes called "ability in spatial manipulations," or "dexterity," and is measured with the aid of performance tests.

3. Temperament: (defined as the characteristic phenomena of an individual's emotional nature, including his susceptibility to emotional stimulation, his customary strength and speed of response, the quality of his prevailing mood and all the peculiarities of fluctuation and intensity in mood; these



phenomena are regarded as dependent upon constitutional make-up, and therefore are largely heredity in origin.)

- a. Broad Emotions - Narrow Emotions. A person with a wide "affective spread" is one who reacts emotionally to a broad range of objects and situations. The person of narrow emotional spread responds infrequently in an emotional manner; his behavior is usually of an even tenor, showing little variation of feeling.
- b. Strong Emotions - Weak Emotions. This deals with the question of the degree of response, the intensity of feeling. Some individuals seem more readily raised than others to an intense degree of response and their average level of response is higher.

II. Expressive traits, which are dynamic modes of adjustment. These three traits are expressive in the sense that they color behavior that is specifically motivated to some ulterior end. That is to say, in the pursuit of almost any goal, the ascendant person will be ascendant, the expansive person will be expansive and the persistent person will be persistent. The ascendant person usually desires to take the active role; the expansive person seeks opportunities to express his ideas; the persistent person actively resists interruption and interference.

1. Ascendance and Submission. In every social relation there is in a sense a conflict of personalities. Whenever two individuals come face to face, one ordinarily must yield for the occasion, or for part of the occasion, to the other. Likewise, in non-social situations an individual must, as a rule, either become the aggressor toward his environment or else submit to pressure, giving in to the forces opposed to him. Further, these traits, it appears, are markedly constant even at an early age, suggesting that temperament is an important factor in their formation. And yet, with sufficient influence they can be altered, both in children and adults. Deliberate attempts at modification, however, are much more successful in transforming submissive people into average or ascendant individuals, than in reducing ascendant people to average or submissive grade.
2. Expansion and Reclusion. A person who is expansive projects himself into his social relationships; he talks readily, expresses his opinions frequently, and leaves little doubt as to his views on any subject. The reclusive person finds little to say; he relates his opinions briefly or not at all. He is reticent. This pair of expressive traits is always easy to identify.
3. Persistence and Vacillation. One person, we say, is tenacious, resolute, dogged or steadfast, with marked strength of will; another, we say, is inconstant, irresolute, fluctuating, and opportunist.

### III. Attitudinal Traits:

1. Extroversion and Introversion. A person is extroverted when he gives

his fundamental interest to the outer or objective world, and attributes an all important and essential value to it; he is introverted, on the contrary, when the objective world suffers a sort of depreciation, or want of consideration, for the sake of the exaltation of the individual himself. The extrovert usually considers the introvert a sick soul; the introvert is often of the opinion that the extrovert is a Philistine and a bore.

2. Self-objectification and Self-deception. Good insight forces a person, not only to be prevented from being deceived by his own rationalization, but to face objectively the weakness and strength of his personal equipment. A sense of humor is also important in the development of a mature personality.
3. Self-assurance and Self-distrust. In ordinary life we say that this man, though able, lacks self-confidence while another is self-disparaging, and a third is too sure of himself.
4. Gregariousness and Solitariness. This variable is exclusively social in its reference. The first means the desire to be present in social groups; solitariness, aversion to them. Some people cannot bear to stay alone; they have a constant hunger for company. Conversely, the hermit goes to great lengths to find solitude and is uncomfortable in the presence of people. Most people of course have both sets of desires, usually in rotation; when satiated with company they long for solitude; when satiated with solitude they grow lonely. But the relative incidence of one desire over the other seems a suitable measure for the variable in question.
5. Altruism and Self-seeking. Altruism refers to the fact that some people do consistently modify their conduct to accord with the interests of other people. Self-seeking is used of individuals who have failed to concern themselves with the welfare of others and instead seek only their own good, generally at the expense of the interests of others.
6. Social Intelligence. This is "tact," the ready power of appreciating and doing what is required by social circumstances. Other equivalent phrases are "social insight" and "susceptibility to social stimulation." The skillful hostess, high in social intelligence, has learned how to make people feel at home and to anticipate their needs; she has learned how to be present-minded when minor social catastrophes occur.

Thus does Allport classify personality traits with a threefold category: Psycho-biological factors, Expressive traits and Attitudinal traits. In seeking to understand how personality factors, as those just described briefly, operate in different type of conversion, it is important to remember that we have indicated that basically conversion is either of the gradual type or it may occur with illuminating suddenness as an emotional episode. We have also started that the word conversion is used primarily in two senses in the New Testament: conversion to become a Christian and conversion as a Christian. Since the human factor in conversion is so diverse and intricate, each conversion therefore must be considered in the light both of the New Testament use of the word as



well as a thorough understanding, psychologically speaking, of personality traits.

An illustration of what has been said may clarify this. The writer is well acquainted both with a man and his sister, who is eighteen months older than the man in question. The psycho-biological factors are without much variation in the two persons considered. There is some similarity in their expressive traits but the brother is more ascendant and the sister more submissive. Their attitudinal traits are likewise very much the same with the exception of the fact that the brother is more of an extrovert while the sister tends toward introversion. Both of them were brought into the church at the same time, but more due to the parents' influence and urging than their own desire. This occurred when the sister was 14 and the brother 12 years of age. When the brother was 18 and in his second year of college, he experienced what is called the illuminating suddenness of crisis conversion. Up to this time he was not sure of his salvation and was without assurance of divine forgiveness. But after this episode his entire outlook on life and the Christian emphases was changed. Now he had become a Christian; now he had direction for his life:- he decided to become a minister and has remained such until this day. His sister, on the other hand, has no recollection of any crisis experience whatever; with her the experience of conversion has been gradual and almost without notice. But both are of the same theological outlook, the sister is also in Christian work, having been in the mission field for several years. Both are married but still keep up the same general Christian interests. Yet the conversion of the one was with illuminating suddenness and of the other was most gradual. What part do personality factors play in these two conversions? Only a careful psychological study with the use of a psychograph could reveal the personality differences, which obviously are very minor. But it may be said with definite certainty that psychological factors as they reveal personality traits, are of utmost importance in any study of the different types of conversion, whether recorded in the sacred scriptures or in the annals of experience.

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## "PERSONALITY FACTORS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONVERSIONS"

by

Rev. Paul E. Graf (Baptist)

John F. Dashiell, Consulting Editor of the McGraw-Hill Publications in Psychology once said "It has been shown that in the English language there are something like eighteen thousand terms that are used in designating distinctive personal forms of behavior".<sup>1</sup> This points up some of the semantical difficulties we may expect to encounter in dealing with personality factors and particularly with behavior.

It seems to this writer that one good reason for asking representatives of three denominations to consider personality factors in different type of conversion, would be to enquire into such questions as the following; What does your denomination believe about conversion? Do you maintain distinctive denominational patterns of life which might tend to develop certain personality factors? Are there attempts in your group at ordering the environment or segments of it with the aim of eliciting a specific type conversion? If so, what type receives this favor? What type or types of conversion behavior have the greatest incidence in your denomination?

Ever since the great Body of Divinity written by John Gill in the seventeenth century, conversion has been clearly defined for Baptists: "Regeneration is the sole act of God;---in regeneration men are wholly passive as they also are in the first moment of conversion; but by it become active"<sup>2</sup> For more than half a century the Systematic Theology of A. H. Strong has been the standard text in Baptist Seminaries. He speaks the voice of Baptists in articulating the view that Conversion is man's reaction to God's act of Regeneration. In this scheme of redemption regeneration is static, not changing in qualitative dimension. It may be looked upon in this respect as a control factor. Nor does it adjust to the unique personality organization within which it is encapsulated. But the psychological, physiological and sociological manner in which the person initially adjusts to it, is what Baptists understand to be Christian conversion. And among the many possible subjective responses in conversion only two, faith and repentance are believed always and in every case to characterize evangelical conversion. Conversion is composed of belief and behavior. It is in this sense then, the initial step in sanctification. However it appears that some Baptists in some places seem to look upon forms of conversion behavior as a test of the genuineness of regeneration. In fine, the more profound the emotional manifestation, the more certainly is indicated God's work of regeneration. In common parlance conversion is often equated with 'being saved', 'born again', 'regenerated', 'accepting Christ'.

In order to ascertain the thinking of Baptists in reference to the question

1 John Fredrick Dashiell. Fundamentals of General Psychology.  
Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1949. P. 241

John Gill. A Body Of Doctrinal Divinity. Reprint by Turner  
Lassetter: Atlanta, Georgia, 1950. P. 545

of the existence of patterns of Baptist Life which might correlate with certain types of conversion, we sent a questionnaire to forty active Baptist clergymen. There were ten such questionnaires sent to four major Baptist connections. These were the American Baptist Convention, The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, The Southern Baptist Convention and the Conservative Baptist Association. This was a random sampling with the exceptions that each was known to be orthodox and to have been active in the ministry for a number of years. It was felt that this population though not sufficiently large for adequate research of this nature, would nevertheless provide specific information from which we could draw logical inferences. To a letter of introduction explaining the inquiry, the following questions were appended:

- (1) Do you believe there is a reasonably consistent pattern, atmosphere or emphasis in Baptist life, work, worship or ways of doing things to which you would attribute one of the following types of evangelical conversion?
  - (a) Crisis with emotional upheaval,
  - (b) Crisis with mild emotional behavior,
  - (c) Gradual awakening (Always believed from earliest remembrance)

If your answer is Yes, check here ( ) and explain.

If your answer is No, check here ( ) and state why.

- (2) I believe conversion type ( ) as above, to have a higher incidence among Baptists.
- (3) In my ministry there have been more of type ( ) conversions.

Of the forty inquires mailed, thirty four were returned. Some of the responses were not usable. Two respondents did not answer question number one. There were twenty-four who answered Yes to question number one and only three who answered No. Of the three types of conversion, the crisis with mild emotional behavior was adjudged to have the highest incidence among Baptists. There were twenty-five who felt this way about it, while five indicated type (c) gradual awakening, and only one thought type (a) crisis and upheaval, to be the most typically Baptist. On the question of their personal ministry, twenty-three respondents reported more type (b) crisis conversions with mild emotional behavior. Only five had observed more type (c) gradual awakening, and none had observed more of type (a), the crisis with upheaval. And this is the more pertinent of the data derived from our limited pilot study.

It seems noteworthy that these clergymen from the different segments of Baptist ranks rather uniformly agree that there is a consistent pattern of Baptist life which to them has some specific relation to a crisis type conversion of mild emotional behavior. In attempting to tabulate the explanations they gave in reference to these patterns we found it necessary to reduce the many to three or four. These are about as follows: 1. Preaching, that is preaching the Word of God, the doctrines, God's Holiness, the place of faith, human depravity, etc., 2. Emphasis upon the need of personal commitment, 3. Invitations to make commitment both in public church services or in private through personal soul winning activities. To sum it up then, what we preach and the way we preach, the aura and emphasis upon commitment now, immediacy, this is what was reported as being the way Baptists do things which emanates in crisis conversion.



Baptists have always considered it soundly Scriptural to plan sermons and services which culminate in hortatory invitation. There are but few exceptions. It is further a part of our life to press the incumbency of personal witness in actually leading men to decision. In both of these expressions of our brand of Christianity there have been and are abuses. The persuasive personal urging for decision on a dimly lighted street corner or the manipulation of influences surrounding an invitation in the sanctuary may both lead to conversions which are evidently not genuine. But good or ill results notwithstanding, we feel the urgency to beseech men. However I should reject as untrue to facts, the suggestion that Baptist praxis places a premium upon undue emotion in circumstances surrounding conversion. 'Undue emotion' is of course a value judgment.

I believe it to be true that the denominations have the character and the resources with which to directly or indirectly guide the growth of individuals in such a way that some planned personality characteristics may reasonably be expected to develop. And this could have great value for us because it is upon the basis of known personality characteristics that we think we can come nearest to predicting behavior.

It is in fact, nothing new to plan Christian strategy aimed at the formation of total personality of a specific model. It merely sounds novel to cast it in psychological nomenclature. It has always been Scriptural to plan church influences which it has hoped would make for the growth of a personality like that of Jesus. This high aim, Baptists share with her sister denominations.

The few stereotypes we have of some specific denominational personalities might seem to point this up. If there is such a thing it could be a cue to us of important possibilities for capturing in depth, a greater area of human genius for Christ.

But we have more often spoken of character than of personality, perhaps not sensing their relatedness. Nor have we seemed to take real cognizance of the fact that an act of behavior as expressing character, is at the same time and perhaps more importantly, an expression of personality. The behavior we have so religiously sought to order in righteousness is always and unfailingly an expression of the felt needs of a personality. What we are concerned for is that the church shall understand and operate at the level of the determinants of personality in the vigor and challenge with which it has sought to develop character. Is it feasible for us to attempt to influence personality growth by effecting some control of personality determinants? Very evidently, denominational forces must walk with tremendous influence through both major and minor areas of an individual's life if planned personality thrusts are to be developed. I do not believe this is being accomplished in any widespread fashion by Baptists.

In turning to a Sociological facet of our present interest, we wish to mention the telling influence of primary groups upon the development of personality and upon the cluster of ideas which form a frame of reference for conversion behavior. These small meaningful groups, for children especially the home, school and church, and for older people, other subcultures with which they identify, these all tend to define and delimit the several dimensions of both pre and post conversion behavior. In other words behavior is determined through social norms which have been internalized by the individual. As Dr. Ferms<sup>3</sup> states it "it is possible to provide an intellectual climate within the atmosphere of any religion that will either eliminate the

crisis experience altogether or will greatly diminish its force and brilliance". And the converse of this statement may also be true. The atmosphere of which he speaks may not necessarily include maneuvers aimed at momentary emotional stimulus, as in an evangelistic service or in personal counseling, but it may effectively operate in horizontal dimension over years of time and in every important area of an individuals living. It may in fact, represent the effective control of personality determinants. Of course we are joyfully aware that throughout any fixity or law of these determinants, God walks in utter Sovereignty and at every developmental juncture.

Included in this general scheme with the Sociological factors is the vital area of Biological personality determinants. For biological factors unquestionable tend to determine a particular kind of personality and physical structure will make for differences in reaction to stimuli of any kind. Personality develops as a function of a physiological organism and physical limitations are always with it. Denominational nurture cannot afford to bypass understanding and action as it concerns the wholesome development of biological motivation. What the Scriptures say about dietary, health, and hygiene ideas should be an essential part of the nurture of healthy personalities.

And so we see that at least among Baptists, they think that the way they live and do things molds persons in such ways that these persons consistently respond in conversion. But the preaching, pressing for personal commitment, and public and private invitations which were mentioned as Baptist patterns, these seem to this writer to be very far from a master plan of Christian nurture which would fully exploit the psychological, physiological and sociological principles of personality determination, making the person like God and directing him toward God in every kind of behavior.



OSKAR PFISTER: A STUDY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND RELIGION

by

Rev. Alan Richardson

In his famous biography of Freud, Ernest Jones includes a letter he received from the founder of the psychoanalytic movement advising Jones regarding some contemplated literary work. One sentence in that letter had a prophetic quality-- "Napoleon can wait, even the translation of Ferenczi's may; the translation of Pfister is no work for you..."<sup>1</sup> As if by universal decree, a serious study of the contribution of Oskar Pfister to the history of psychoanalysis became the work of no one until this decade.<sup>2</sup>

Just why this task was ignored remains one of the idiosyncratic mysteries of the historical process. Perhaps it was his dual competence in both psychoanalysis and religion that presented a formidable obstacle to the specialist in either field. And yet his influential position in the early history of psychoanalysis demands the attention of the serious student.

Chronologically and professionally Pfister was first a minister and second a psychoanalyst. He never deserted his pastoral vocation throughout a career marked by an increasing participation in the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

In seeking to account for this dual interest, one cannot avoid a "Freudian hunch" that it was related to an unfulfilled wish of his father. As a child, the elder Pfister was stricken with diphtheria. An operation saved his life. When in later years he became a liberal minister in the Reformed Church of Switzerland, he resolved to study medicine so that he could be a doctor both of the body and of the soul. His untimely death destroyed this possibility. Oskar, the youngest of four boys was three years old at the time of his father's death having been born on February 23, 1873.

Whatever the genetic principle may be, the historical outworking of his career can be traced. After the death of his father, the family settled in a Moravian community where their poverty and their piety found sympathetic support. From this early experience, Pfister may have experienced much that led both to his basically simple theology and to his emphasis on the practical in religion.

In 1891 he enrolled at the University of Basel where he studied philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup>Jones, Ernest, M.D., The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Basic Books, Inc., New York, N.Y., Vol. II, p. 100

<sup>2</sup>The most extensive analysis of the contribution of Oskar Pfister is to be found in the doctoral dissertation of John W. Johnnaber at Boston Uni. entitled, Oskar Pfister's Synthesis of Religion and Psychology

Basel at that time was one of the strongholds of theological orthodoxy in Switzerland. Pfister was later to become a leader in the liberal wing of the Reformed Church.

His first pastorate was in Zurich Oberland in 1897. The following year he married Erica Wuneerli. Theirs seemed to be a happy marriage in the European sense, reminiscent of the remark that John Calvin made after the death of his wife, when he said, "She never interfered with my work".

As history has often demonstrated, a progressive and original movement is preceded by the negation or denial of a substantial alternative. For Pfister this occurred in 1908 when he was invited to become a Professor in Ordinary of systematic and practical theology at this seminary. Pfister declined this unusual opportunity because he felt that to teach the "science of belief and practical theology", he would have to be connected with a congregation. His decision seems to be validated by the current, clinical emphasis in theological education. He declined what his future teacher and friend, Freud, greatly desired, but was denied--the status of a full professorship at a university.

Shortly after this academic declination, Pfister became acquainted with the writings of Freud in June, 1908. Within a year he met Freud personally. Here began a friendship that was to continue uninterrupted and vital throughout Freud's life.

Those who have tried to explain this paradoxical association have been hard-pressed and have generally pleaded the very incongruity of the relationship as somehow illuminating. Ernest Jones writes.

"At the beginning of 1909 Freud made another friendship of a very different kind (previously Jones had discussed A.A. Brill); it lasted without a cloud to the end of his life. It was with Pfarrer Oskar Pfister of Zurich, with whom he carried on an extensive correspondence later. Pfister's first visit to Freud was on Sunday, April 25, 1909. Freud was very fond of him. He admired his high ethical standards, his unflinching altruism and his optimism concerning human nature. Probably it also amused him to think he could be on unrestrainedly friendly terms with a Protestant clergyman, to whom he could address letters as 'Dear Man of God' and on whose tolerance toward 'an unrepentent heretic'--as he described himself--he could always count. Pfister, on his side, felt unbounded admiration and gratitude towards the man who he insisted was a true Christian. The only concession Freud could make to that gentle impeachment was to remark that his friend Christian von Ehrenfels of Prague, who had just written a book on sexual ethics, had christened himself and Freud as 'Sexual Protestants.'<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps this friendship had deeper roots. Although Freud wrote eloquently about his objections to religion, he was obsessed with thoughts of his own death and general depression and pessimism. One wonders whether his relationship with Pfister represented an identification with a vicarious hope over against what he felt compelled to affirm about the nature of life.

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, op. cit., p. 46



From the beginning Freud encouraged Pfister in his study and application of psychoanalysis to pastoral work. In a letter dated February 9, 1909 (Note: before their first meeting), he wrote:

"Lasting success in psychoanalysis certainly depends on the conjunction of two issues: the obtaining of gratification, and the mastery and sublimation of the obdurate instinct. If we generally succeed in the first respect it is for the most part because of the nature of our material; people who over a long period have been sufferers who do not come to a physician expecting moral elevation--often very inferior material. You on the other hand have young people with recent conflicts who are attached to you personally, and who are in a suitable state for sublimation and indeed for its most convenient form--religious sublimation. You do not, of course, doubt that in the first place your success comes about in the same way as ours, through erotic transference to your person. But you are in the fortunate position of leading them on to God and reconstructing the conditions of early times, fortunate at least in the one respect that religious piety stifles neuroses. We no longer have this opportunity of settling the matter. People in general, whatever their racial origin, are irreligious--we also are mostly thoroughly irreligious--and since the "other forms of sublimation through which we replace religious are commonly too difficult for most patients, our cure generally issues in the search for gratification. Moreover, we do not see in sexual gratification anything forbidden or sinful in itself, but recognize it as a valuable part of our vital activity. You know that our word 'erotic' includes what in your profession is called 'love' and is not at all restricted to gross sexual pleasure. Thus our patients have to seek in people what we are not able to promise them from the Land Above and what we have to refuse them personally. Naturally, therefore, it is much harder for us, and dissolving the transference impairs many good results."

"In itself psychoanalysis is neither religious nor the opposite, but an impartial instrument which can serve the clergy as well as the laity when it is used only to free suffering people. I have been very struck at realizing how I have never thought of the extraordinary help the psychoanalytic method can be to pastoral work, probably because wicked heretics like us are so far away from that circle." <sup>4</sup>

Pfister moved rather quickly from the periphery to the center of the other circle---the psychoanalytic. He began his psychoanalytic experience with a female parishoner who came with a threatening letter directed against her. Pfister surmised that the woman had herself written the letter. At this time Jung served as a psychiatric consultant and confirmed his diagnosis. His major analytic work was done with children in his congregation and his major extension of his analytic interest was in the field of religious education where he attempted to revise pedagogical procedures in the light of his psychoanalytic understanding.

During the years 1909-1914, Pfister studied and participated in the psychoanalytic seminar at Zurich. Carl Jung was president of the association over the

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Ibid., pp. 439, 400

period. Little is recorded of the nature of his participation in the group. He was actively engaged in analyzing members of his church and in presenting his thoughts to the seminar. The major literary work of that period was a book. The Psychoanalytic Method, published in 1913 which contained a warm and complimentary introduction by Freud.

Freud's admiration for the gentle pastor deepened during these years. He credits Pfister with freeing him from the illusion of achieving success through riches. At a time of financial need, Freud continued to see a patient whom he considered well. Upon learning of this, Pfister gave a forthright word of caution to his esteemed friend. Freud immediately terminated the analysis of the patient.

Also at this time, Pfister became an active defender of Freud against his critics. Forster was a particularly vehement critic. Oskar Pfister responded by letter to one of his bitter attacks and sent a copy of the letter to Freud. On January 1, 1910, Freud replied to Pfister in this most appreciative way:

"I admire the way you can write, so gently, so humanely, so full of considerateness, so objectively, so much more written for the readers than against your enemy. That is obviously the right way to produce an educative effect, and it is also more becoming to a man in your position. I thank you specially for leaving my personality as much as possible in the background. But I do not write like that: I should rather not write at all, i.e., I don't write at all. I could only write to free my soul, to dispose of my affects, and since that would not turn out to be very edifying--it would give a deal of pleasure to the opponents, who would be happy to see me angry--I don't reply to them."<sup>5</sup>

Just how loyal a friend Pfister proved to be was demonstrated in 1914 when Jung renounced Freud and split the Zurich group. Two things seem especially significant. First, Jung's primary criticism was against the sexual content of the Unconscious in Freud's theory. Jung found the divine as well as the animal in the Unconscious and ascribed the sexual process to the province of symbolization. That this should not appeal to the clergyman seems surprising. The answer appears to be in Pfister's conviction that the mental processes are the result of the biological needs of man. Second, Pfister was definitely in the minority in the rift. From 1914-1917 he was the only active supporter of Freud in Zurich.

Something of Freud's curiosity about Pfister's unique position as a theologian and a psychoanalyst is expressed in a letter dated October 9, 1918, a time when interest in orthodox psychoanalysis was being revived in Zurich. He wrote in part:

"From a therapeutic point of view I can only envy your opportunity of bringing about sublimation into religion. But the beauty of religion assuredly has no place in psychoanalysis. Naturally our paths in therapy diverge here, and it can stay at that. Quite by the way, how comes it that none of the godly ever devised psychoanalysis and that one had to wait for a godless Jew?"

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Ibid., pp. 123, 124



Pfister responded to Freud's question in a most complimentary way:

"As to your question why none of the godly discovered psychoanalysis but only a godless Jew. Well, because piety is not the same as genius for discovering, and because the godly were for a great part not worthy to bring such an achievement to fruition. Moreover, in the first place you are not a Jew, which my boundless admiration for Amos, Isaiah, the author of Job and the prophets makes me greatly regret and in the second place you are not so godless, since he who lives for truth lives in God and he who fights for the freeing of love 'dwelleth in God' (I John IV, 16). If you were to become aware of and experience your interpolation in the universals which for me are as inevitable as the synthesis of the notes of a Beethoven symphony are to a musician, I would say of you, 'There never was a better Christian.'"<sup>6</sup>

A Freudian psychoanalytic society was formed in Zurich in February, 1919 through the joint efforts of Pfister and Dr. Oberholzer. Invitational letters were sent to fifty persons, of which twenty-one responded. The membership was designed to "embrace all those adherents of psychoanalysis who had not accepted the theories of Adler and Jung".<sup>7</sup> One of the rules adopted by the group was that "non-medical men should work in cooperation with a medical doctor to avoid diagnostic errors". This had been Pfister's practice from the start.

Early members of the group were Hermann Rorschach (elected 1st vice-president) and Jean Piaget. Pfister was a member of the executive committee. In 1925 he was elected Vice-president and in 1928 he served as Secretary.

The first paper he read before the society was at its second meeting and dealt with the subject, "Biological and Psychological Foundations of Expressionism". This was the report on the analysis of a young artist whose artistic expressions were used to bring out unconscious material.

Over the next quarter of a century Pfister actively participated, giving numerous papers both to the society and to meetings of pastors, teachers and doctors at large. In all, he wrote twenty-seven books and fifty-nine articles.

On February 25, 1933 the minutes of the society record:

"On February 23, 1933 Pfarrer Dr. Pfister completed his sixtieth year. At the meeting of the Swiss Psychoanalytic Society on February 25, 1933, the President congratulated him on the occasion in an address expressing his own and the society's admiration and appreciation of Dr. Pfister's long loyalty and devotion to Prof. Freud and to psychoanalysis, and his untiring energies in working for its cause."<sup>8</sup>

As may well be imagined, not all of his fellow pastors supported his interest in psychoanalysis and on at least three occasions he was required to undergo an

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 458

<sup>7</sup>International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 1, 1920, p. 365

examination of his beliefs. Fortunately he was able to survive this theological scrutiny while maintaining his integrity.

In his characteristic gentility Pfister wrote to John W. Johnnaber, a theological student at Boston University, that he had enjoyed great freedom. His own language expresses it best:

"Unsere Schweizerkirchen sind die freiesten der Welt, wofür ich Gott danke. Ich habe nie die geringsten Konflikte mit den Behörden gehabt und genoss das herzlichste Verstrauen der Gemeinde bis zu meinem Richtritt 1939, ja bis heute."<sup>9</sup>

The integration of psychoanalysis and religion was achieved by Pfister primarily at a practical or clinical level. He did not believe that adequate correlation was possible at a theoretical level. Epistemologically, however, his theological understanding of man was modified and deepened by his psychoanalytic knowledge.

The clinical perspective in which Pfister found the most significant interrelation between his two vocations was in the relief of anxiety and fear. He wrote:

"The ideal conception of the overcoming of anxiety by religion is at the present time in the great religious of civilization) usually impractical without the aid of analysis."<sup>10</sup>

Out of his clinical experience and theological reflection he wrote his major theological work, Christianity and Fear, in which he traces the role which religion has played in creating and alleviating fear. In the book he is quite critical of the Reformation theologian, John Calvin, but is impressed with Zwingli.

His prominence in the church was particularly evident in the field of religious education. Pfister served on a number of denominational committees on religious education. As a pastor he was very dissatisfied with the catechistic instruction in the Reformed Church and subsequently he reorganized his own program along more existential and personal lines. Instead of proceeding along traditional paths of rote memorization, he tried to relate the doctrines of the church to the personal problems and struggles of the young students. Out of his teaching experience he wrote two books, Some Applications of Psychoanalysis (1922) and Psychoanalysis in the Service of Education (1922).

In summation it may be said that Pfister saw three areas where psychoanalysis would come to the aid of religion. First, the process of psychoanalysis helps in preparation for religion, since it increases in the non-Christian the desire for truth and love. Second, psychoanalysis is an indispensable aid in the elimination of obsessive neurotic and hysterical elements in natural and magical religions. Third, there are certain parallels in the psychoanalytic process to religious conversion. There is regression to child-like attitudes of dependence, faith and openness to new truth. Here he quotes the words of Jesus, "A little child shall lead them". There is in the transference relationship a parallel in man's identifi-

<sup>8</sup>International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 15, 1934, p. 457

<sup>9</sup>Personal letter to John W. Johnnaber, December 3, 1949

<sup>10</sup>International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 14, 1933, p. 291



cation with Christ. Also there is in both psychoanalysis and religion a process of reconciliation, a healing of the schisms that exist within man, between people and, Pfister would add, between man and God.<sup>11</sup>

Our present time has seen the emergence of significant communication between religion and psychoanalysis. Theological education has sought the aid of psychiatry. In a number of well-known schools, psychiatrists are serving as instructors to theological students. Organizations like the National Academy of Religion and Mental Health and the Christian Association for Psychological Studies are being established and are gaining in scientific and theological prestige. All of this seems very new and progressive, and, of course, in many ways it is; however, it is well to remember that this development is the late blossoming of what had been germinal and essential from the beginning in the person of Oskar Pfister.

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<sup>11</sup>c.f. John W. Johnnaber, Oscar Pfister's Synthesis of Religion and Psychology, Doctoral dissertation, Boston University, Chap. 6, 7

Christian Association For Psychological Studies  
Annual Business Meeting.....April 5, 1961

- 1- The annual business meeting of the Association was called to order at 11:30 A.M. at the Morrison Hotel, Chicago.
- 2- Thirty-one voting members were in attendance.
- 3- The President, Alan Richardson, called the meeting to order and offered prayer.
- 4- The minutes of the 1960 annual business meeting, as they appeared in the 1960 Convention Proceedings, were approved.
- 5- The Secretary's report was given by Harland Steele and was received as information, as follows:
  - a- We have a membership of 115, and five new applications for membership on hand.
  - b- We have a mailing list of 162.
  - c- The executive committee met three times during the year: 5/3/60, 9/23/60, 11/10/60. The full Board of Directors met three times during the year: 5/25/60, 11/7/60, 1/6/61.
  - d- Our Association is still engaged in the legal process with the Department of Internal Revenue to become tax exempt.
  - e- Twenty-three educational institutions are getting complimentary copies of the Proceedings.
- 6- Dr. M. J. Beukema gave the treasurer's report as follows: and it was approved.

Balance in Treasury March 1, 1960	\$158.09
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Receipts:

Receipts at 1960 Conference	777.33
Receipts from Membership fees and Proceedings throughout the year	<u>188.00</u>

Total Receipts	\$1123.42
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Disbursements:

Conference Expenses:	259.01
Dining Hall Charge	\$155.40
Programs	101.36
Card Holders	2.25

Michigan Corporation and Securities Comm.	7.00
Secretarial Work	91.50
Postage and Supplies	145.17
Travel Expenses	57.13
"The Newsletter"	66.13
Grand Rapids Mailing Service	248.93
(225 copies of 1960 Proceedings)	
Dr. C. Jaarsma (Honorarium)	<u>100.00</u>

Total Disbursements	<u>974.87</u>
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Balance in Treasury February 28, 1961	\$148.55
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There followed a discussion on our financial situation and a suggestion to investigate the possible raising of dues for all members or establishing different levels of dues was referred to the Board of Directors.

- 7- There were no reports from the Finance Committee or the Organizational Committee.
- 8- The report for the Membership Committee was given by Dr. C. Jaarsma. He stressed the need of increased membership and mentioned that his enlarged committee is devising plans in that direction. The report was received as information.
- 9- H. Steele reported for the Publicity committee that two Newsletters had been published during the year and publicity materials had been sent to 17 journals. This report was received for information.
- 10- Dr. K. Kuiper reported for the Long Range Planning Committee on the matter of the weekend retreat in August at the Episcopalian Camp near Holland, Michigan. It would be held from Friday evening through Sunday. Twelve men showed immediate interest. Further plans would be made and information disseminated.
- 11- Two changes in the Constitution were moved and adopted, as follows:
  - Article 5, paragraph 3, is to be changed to read: "The Board of Directors shall elect from its own number a president, vice president, and treasurer. The Board may appoint from the Association membership an Executive Secretary, said appointment to be on a yearly basis. If he is not a director, the Executive Secretary shall serve as an ex officio member of the Board."
  - Article 8, paragraph 3, is to have these words added: "And in the hands of the membership at least one month prior to the convention."
- 12- The Board of Directors placed before the meeting the following list of nominees for election as Directors:
  - a- From the Institutional Psychiatric field, Marenus Beukema and Richard Rosenaal were nominated. Beukema was elected.
  - b- From the Private Practice Psychiatric field, Klaire Kuiper and Johannes Plekker were nominated. Plekker was elected.
  - c- From the Pastoral field, Harland Steele and Walter Teeuwissen were nominated. Steele was elected.
- 13- The members were reminded that by previous decision of the Board of Directors, the 1962 convention would be held in Holland, Michigan.
- 14- It was moved and adopted that letters of gratitude be sent to the Chicago committee (Richardson, Broman, Busby, Young), Miss Virginia Robinson, the various participants, and the Hotel Convention Bureau. Special appreciation is given to Dr. Granberg for his fine paper.
- 15- It was moved and adopted that it is the sentiment of the membership that the usual honorarium be offered to the Executive Secretary, but that this sentiment is not binding on the Board of Directors.
- 16- The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:15 p.m.

Harland Steele  
Executive Secretary

# MEMBERSHIP 1961

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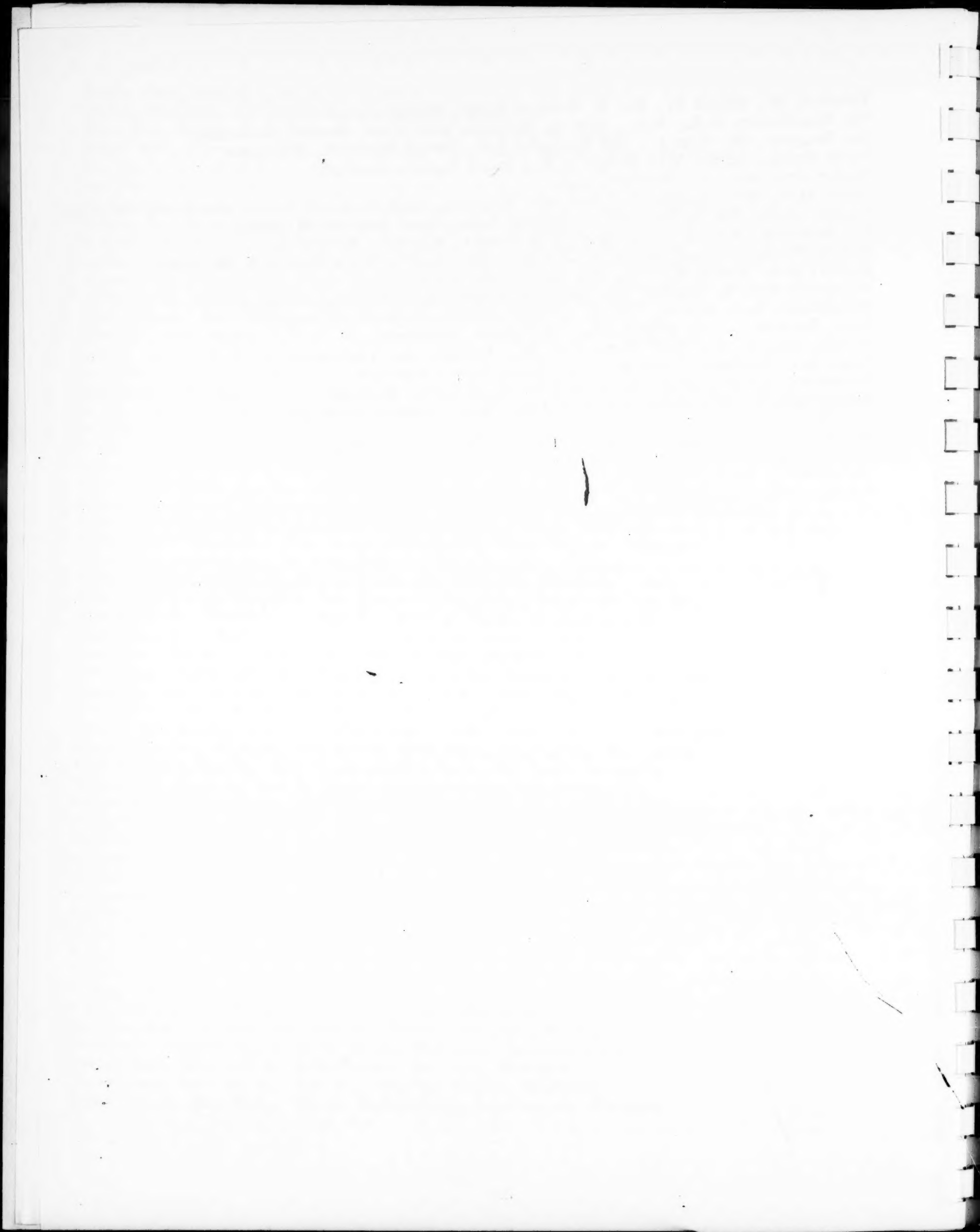


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 Vander Wall, Grace, 10101 Park Street, Bellflower, California  
 Veltkamp, Rev. Lawrence, 1107 Terrace Street, Muskegon, Michigan





## CONVENTION PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 4, 1961

Wednesday, April 5, 1961

8:30 Registration  
Rev. A. Franklin Broman, Registrar

9:30 Opening of the Convention  
Place: The Madison Room  
Presiding: Dr. Cornelius Jaarsma  
Welcome: Rev. E. Alan Richardson,  
-President  
Devotions: Rev. Gilbert Haan

10:00 Main Address  
"Some Issues in the Psychology of  
Christian Conversion".  
Dr. Lars Granberg, Prof. of  
Psychology, Hope College

11:00 Intermission

11:15 General Discussion of the Granberg  
address

12:00 Recess of morning session

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12:15 Luncheon - Suite 440

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1:45 Opening of the afternoon session  
Presiding: Dr. John Daling  
Critique of Dr. Granberg's address  
Theologian.....Rev. Harold Dekker  
Psychologist..Dr. Ronald Rottschafer  
Educator..... Rev. A.F. Broman  
Chaplain..... Dr. Elton Holtrop  
Psychiatrist.....Dr. Stuart Bergsma

3:15 Intermission

3:30 General discussion on the papers  
Summation by Dr. Granberg

4:30 Recess of afternoon session.

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6:30 Convention Banquet  
Place: The Venetian Room  
Presiding: Rev. William Hiemstra  
Music

8:00 Presidential Address  
Rev. E. Alan Richardson  
Discussion

9:30 Recess of evening session

9:00 Opening of morning session  
Place: The Madison Room  
Presiding: Dr. O. Hobart Mowrer  
Devotions: Rev. G. Vande Riet

9:15 Panel Discussion  
Topic: "The Bearing of Conversion on  
Therapeutic Procedures"  
Panelists:  
Chaplain.....Chaplain Paul Miller  
Psychiatrist.....Dr. Johannes Plekker  
Counselor.....Rev. Henry Kik

10:15 Intermission

10:30 General Discussion on the papers

11:15 Business Session of the Association

12:00 Recess of morning session

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12:15 Luncheon - Suite 440  
Organizational Meeting for newly-elected  
Directors

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1:30 Opening of afternoon session  
Presiding: Dr. David Busby  
Paper: "The Co-existence of the Old and  
New Natures" - Dr. Anthony Hoekema

2:10 General discussion on the paper

2:40 Intermission

2:55 Panel Discussion  
Topic: "Personality Factors in Different  
Types of Conversion"  
Panelists:  
Episcopalian View....Dr. B.H. Crewe  
Reformed View....Rev. Donald Blackie  
Baptist View.....Rev. Paul Graf

3:55 General discussion on the papers.

4:25 Closing remarks by the President

4:30 Convention Adjournment

# Personalia

Stuart Bergsma

A.B. - Calvin College  
M.D. - Rush Medical College, Univ.  
of Chicago  
Diplomate Amer. Brd. Psychiatry;  
F.A.C.S.  
Clinical Director, Pine Rest Hosp.

Donald Blackie

A.B. - Univ. of Southern California  
Th.B.- Westminster Theological Seminary  
A.M. - Univ. of Southern California  
Pastor, Reformed Church; Grand Rapids, Mich.

A. Franklin Broman

B.S.- University of Minnesota  
Th.B.- Princeton Theological Seminary  
Th.M.- Westminster Theological Seminary  
Dean of Men, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago

David F. Busby

M.D. - University of Tennessee  
V.A. - Psychiatric Residency, Chicago  
Psychiatry, Private Practice, Niles, Ill.

Benaiah H. Crewe

A.B. - Newfoundland  
D.D. - Alma College  
Founder Saginaw County Psychological Clinic  
Vicar; Episcopal Church; Dryden, Mich.

John T. Daling

A.B. - Calvin College  
A.M. - University of Michigan  
Ph.D.- University of Michigan  
Chairman Psychology Dept., Calvin College

Harold Dekker

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Th.B.- Calvin College  
Th.D. -Candidate; Union Seminary  
Assoc. Professor; Missions; Calvin Seminary

Paul E. Graf

B.S. - Missouri State College  
M.R.E. Central Baptist Seminary  
Graduate Work, Michigan State University  
Baptist Pastor, Speech Therapist, Grand  
Rapids, Mich.

Lars Granberg

A.B. - Wheaton College  
M.A. - University of Chicago  
Ph.D.- University of Chicago  
Prof.-Psychology; Counselor; Hope College

Gilbert Haan

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Archer Ave., Church, Chicago

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A.M. - University of Mississippi  
Hospital Pastor, Pine Rest Hospital

Anthony Hoekema

A.B., B.D.- Calvin College and Seminary  
A.M. - University of Mich. (psychology)  
Th.D.- Princeton Theological Seminary  
Assoc. Prof. Theology, Calvin Seminary

Elton J. Holtrop

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Th.M.- Princeton Theological Seminary  
A.M., Ph.D.- Western Reserve University  
Chaplain, V.A. Hospital, Battle Creek,  
Mich.

Cornelius Jaarsma

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Ph.D. - New York University  
Professor of Education, Calvin College

Henry Kik

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Executive Dir. Christian Guidance Bureau

Paul W. Miller

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B.D. - Western Theological Seminary  
Clinical Pastoral Training  
Chaplain, Ypsilanti State Hospital

O. Hobart Mowrer

~~Ph.D. - Johns Hopkins University~~  
Past President, American Psych. Assoc.  
Noted Psychology author  
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Johannes D. Plekker

B.S., M.S. - University of Michigan  
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E. Alan Richardson

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Presbyterian Pastorates  
Ph.D. - Candidate, University of Chicago

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Garret Vande Riet

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Clinical Training, University of Illinois  
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